

Palmtop

The journal for Psion computers and compatibles

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EDITORIAL

Times are changing in the Psion world, or more correctly, in the Symbian world. With Series 5mx and Revo production continuing for the time being, we can expect to see these models available at selected retail outlets until at least mid-year, possibly even into 2003. With the focus of Psion/Teklogix now firmly in the enterprise market (see our review of the new netpad on page 25) and netBook sales looking moderately healthy, ER5-based hardware will live on for some time to come.

Though we're unlikely ever to see an ER6-based device from Psion, the ER6-powered Nokia 9210 Communicator is proving to be remarkably successful, which bodes well for the introduction of new, more powerful models over the coming months. Although the 9210 is by no means a natural upgrade for existing users who wish to stick with the EPOC platform, there's a good chance that future 9210 descendants *will* be.

Many Psion users will argue that they have little need for a palmtop with built-in communications facilities, but in reality these features will soon be incorporated into virtually every handheld computer, regardless of manufacturer. You may not want a 'communicator' at the moment, because there are still a number of compromises in their design,

but as soon as these devices become top-notch handheld computers *as well as* competent communicators then there will be few real barriers to their desirability.

For the many existing Psion users who are happy with what they've got, and find that it does everything they're likely to need, then why consider a change until eventual failure of the hardware forces the issue? The existing Psion range (as well as the earlier Series 3 models) remain extremely competent tools for a wide variety of tasks—a situation that won't change just because you may not be able to buy one this time next year.

As far as Palmtop magazine is concerned, you can be sure that we'll continue to provide interesting and relevant content on both existing and forthcoming Psion and Symbian-powered computers. No matter how the 'Psion' world changes, we intend for Palmtop magazine to remain your best source of information.

Steve Clack - February 2002

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Thanks... to all the other contributors whose names appear within Palmtop and those who have kindly supplied products for evaluation.

EPOC cartoons - Carl Reader
Printed by Nuffield Press

NEWSREEL

What's new in the world of EPOC and Symbian

netpad arrives

Psion Teklogix has finally (officially) released the 'netpad', an industrial-strength tablet device with a half-VGA colour touch screen, 206MHz StrongARM processor and 16MB of RAM. See page 25 for a full review.

www.psionteklogix.com/main/netpad.htm

New 9210 system software

A new version (1.20) of the PC Suite connectivity software for the Nokia 9210 is now available and downloadable from

Forum Nokia. In addition, a new bug-fix firmware version, 4.13, is also available. You should contact your Nokia Service Centre to see whether it is available in your country. New software is also available to go with the new firmware, but currently only for the MMC applications—not for the internal memory programs. This software should only be used if you have firmware version 4.13 (you can check this by entering *#0000# into the phone side of the 9210 Communicator).

www.forum.nokia.com

netpad

Rugged tablet for demanding environments
A NEW CLASS OF MOBILE COMPUTER

- powerful computing
- touch-screen
- rugged design
- multi-tasking
- flexible connectivity
- power performance
- peripheral support

PSION TEKLOGIX

Symbian secures more funding

Symbian announced a further funding round from its shareholders on 29th January. Matsushita, Motorola, Nokia and Psion have all committed further funding to their existing shareholdings. Symbian is to receive a total of £20.75 million to take the company through the next phase of its development.

David Levin, Psion's CEO said "Today's funding reflects industry-wide support for Symbian OS. Psion has taken up its full pre-emption rights in the current funding round, and remains Symbian's largest shareholder, underlying Psion's commitment to achieving best value from its strategic investment in Symbian".

Revised Symbian mission

Symbian now has a new-look mission statement, the first change to its text since mid-1998 when the company was founded. Gone is the primary mission 'to set the standard for mobile wireless operating systems'.

In its place, the new mission statement begins: 'Symbian is a software licensing company, owned by wireless industry leaders, that is the trusted supplier of the advanced, open standard operating system—Symbian OS—for data-enabled mobile phones.'

In fact, all references to 'wireless information devices' have been replaced by 'phones'. This will inevitably be disappointing to those of us reared on the Psion palmtop families, but at least Symbian now seems rather more focussed.

www.symbian.com

Nokia 7650 announced

Nokia has announced the 7650, also running Symbian OS 6.1 (a.k.a. EPOC Release 6). It's been alternately called a camera and a mobile phone as it combines both in a lightweight, tightly integrated device. When used as a camera, the 176x208 pixel colour display serves as a viewfinder (pictures themselves are at 640x480 pixel resolution). Symbian OS 6.1 supports this convergence and enables the tight integration between phone functionality, camera and PIM applications.

The Nokia 7650 (expected to be available from April) has a full suite of built-in applications (MMS—see below, SMS and Email, Calendar/To-Do list, Contacts, Pinboard, WAP browser, picture taking and sending,





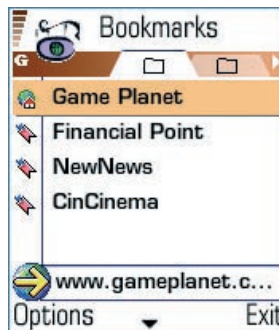
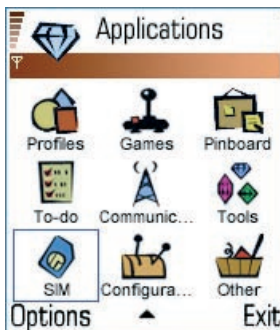
MMS, mentioned above, is Nokia's new Multimedia Messaging Service, seen as the successor to the hugely successful industry-standard SMS text messaging system. Unlike the latter, which is restricted to 160 characters of text, MMS allows 'mixed media' files to be exchanged. In the case of the Nokia 7650 this might be a picture snapped seconds before and MMSed over to a friend's compatible phone or via a gateway to any email address. The extra speed and low cost of GPRS will help here, with the extra size of small colour images and the possibility of short recorded voice snippets.

The 7650 uses the 'Series 60 Platform', Nokia's extension to the Symbian interface and basic application set. Series 60 includes much of the MMS and other connectivity functions of the phone.

photo album and image viewer, games, etc.) It only includes 4MB of storage for content and small third-party applications, which will prevent it being targetted by any serious reference programs. The 7650 will be equipped with Bluetooth and infrared links for beaming to other devices, and GPRS (always on, packet data) capabilities.

Interestingly, Nokia sees the future in terms of five device classes. Today's simple 'Voice-only' phones are the first. The Nokia 9210, the first ER6 phone, fits the 'Business' category, while the Nokia 7650 is in the 'Imaging' category. The remaining two categories are 'Entertainment' and 'Mediaphones'.

www.nokia.com/phones/7650
www.forum.nokia.com



Symbian at 206MHz

Symbian and Intel have announced the completion of work to port the Symbian OS to the Intel StrongARM SA-1110 processor. Operating at 206MHz, the SA-1110 is used in many popular handheld computing products. Using the SA-1110 will enable rich multimedia capabilities as GPRS devices with sufficient bandwidth to download audio and video become available over the coming months.

www.symbian.com

Ericsson launches R380e

The original R380 phone was the world's first smartphone/communicator to run a version of EPOC, albeit a locked down variant with no support for third party

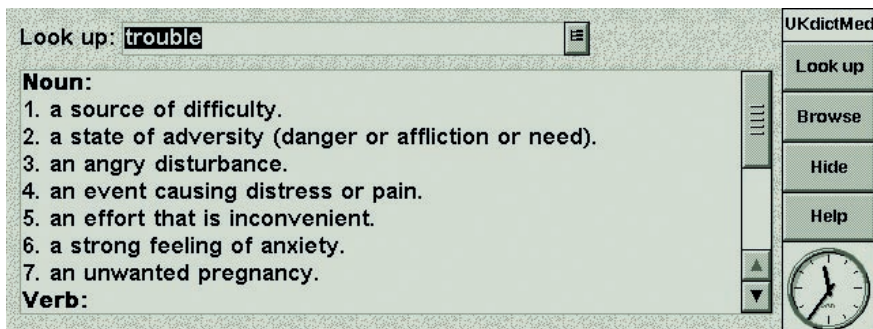
applications. Ericsson has now announced the R380e, in 'Denim Blue', and adding faster operation, a WAP 1.2.1 browser with WTLS security, a digital ink application, support for Over-The-Air (OTA) network configuration updates, desktop USB connectivity and a 25% increase in battery performance. The R380e will be reviewed in the next issue of Palmtop. Other versions of the R380 launched recently include the R380sc (with a Chinese interface) and the R380 WORLD (a GSM 900/1900 version for the USA).

www.ericsson.com

Symbian Expo rescheduled

Symbian's Global Developer Expo, which was postponed in November after the US





terrorist attacks, will now be held in April at the London Excel Centre.

www.symbian.com

Fujitsu goes Symbian

Fujitsu has announced that it will use the Symbian OS for its next generation of mobile handsets, giving Symbian almost a clean sweep amongst mobile telecommunications manufacturers.

www.symbian.com

LittleSense revamp

Version 2.0 of the ever-popular LittleSense dictionary is now available for download, with a range of different-sized dictionary files to suit different memory requirements,

from 500K to 2.5MB. Notably, both UK and US English language variants are available.

www.necronomicon.co.uk

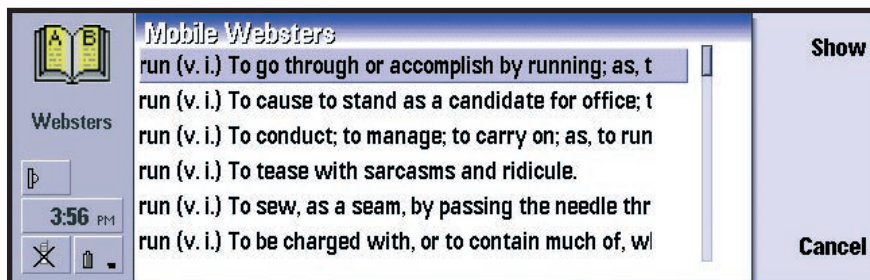
UniFEP Light Korean

Enfour has announced the release of UniFEP Light Korean, the first display and input system for Hangul (Korean phonetic) characters on EPOC. The system includes 2350 hangul syllables plus Jamo (single consonants/vowels), all at five different font sizes.

www.enfour.com/korean

Webster's on the 9210

Webster's Dictionary has been specially ported for the 9210, with a tiny memory





overhead that will sit well on the memory-starved Communicator. Selections and word definitions can be copied to and from the clipboard, for liaison with other 9210 applications.

surerange.com/symbian

CityMaps for the 9210

TomTom (a.k.a. Palmtop BV) has launched CityMaps (a.k.a. Street Planner) for the Nokia 9210. It won first prize in the

recent Nokia Mobile Challenge Application Contest and looks to be as useful on the 9210 as it has been on other EPOC palmtops.

The CD version of TomTom Citymaps covers over 100,000 European cities.

www.palmtop.nl/crystal/demo/street.html

Series 7/netBook car stand

POD Ltd has recently released a new, heavy duty in-car mounting system for the Psion Series 7 and netBook models. The unit can be used with or without a docking station, uses a strong construction with a safety strap to secure the computer, and the 'no holes' fixing solution ensures that the mounting system can be removed in seconds. The system is priced at around £180-200, depending on vehicle.

www.poduk.com





Industry NEWS

***A brief update on what's happening in
the non-EPOC sector of mobile computing...***

The new Microsoft Pocket PC 2002 platform has caused quite a stir in the mobile computing industry. Boasting an improved user interface and a host of other features, the platform has a distinct multimedia feel about it. As well as benefitting the consumer market, features such as instant messaging and a terminal client also serve to make the OS attractive to the lucrative corporate market. Analysts are predicting that the new platform could win over a large percentage of the PDA market this year, and the next few months will see the release of a number of new Pocket PCs. Among the wave of devices already announced are offerings from Compaq, Toshiba, NEC and Hewlett Packard.

Microsoft remains committed to Bluetooth technology, and many future Pocket PCs will support the technology. The latest devices from Compaq, Toshiba and NEC are all Bluetooth-enabled. Developed for use within Personal Area Networks (PAN), Bluetooth technology has been essentially designed as a cable replacement. Benefits include the ability to print without a cable connection and ease of synchronization

between mobile computing devices and similarly equipped PCs and mobile phones, again without the need for cables. Despite the initial hype, Bluetooth modules and adaptors have only recently started to appear. A variety of Bluetooth-enabled products from a range of manufacturers are reportedly due over the coming months, with Nokia having already announced plans for three such accessories designed for use with mobile phones.

Despite the growing popularity of the Pocket PC platform, Palm and Palm OS-based PDA manufacturer Handspring maintain one key marketing advantage over Microsoft—lower priced models for the consumer market. For example, Palm's m100 is now available on the High Street in the UK for less than £50.

Palm continues to push forward and has formed a working alliance with Handango, a major publisher of handheld and wireless software. The company recently reported that their second fiscal quarter revenue (ending 30 Nov 2001) was up 36% from the preceding quarter. However, the figures

indicate that revenue was down 44% from that reported for the same period in 2000.

Handspring and Infowave Software have reported a sales and marketing partnership focused on bringing secure and reliable wireless solutions to optimise Handspring products for both corporate and individual users. The companies will initially work together on the new Handspring Treo range of compact communicators. The Treo is set for release early this year and will initially be available in two monochrome versions. One includes a keyboard and both models combine a GSM phone, a Palm OS organiser and wireless data applications that will allow the user to send and receive SMS text messages and email. A colour version of the Treo will be added to the range later this year.

As we go to press, Palm is on the verge of launching a new top-end model, the m515, with a bright colour screen and 16MB of memory, and a new colour mid-range unit, the m130, both using an internal rechargeable battery. Late last year they also released the m125, a low cost monochrome unit. All these handhelds use Palm's

new Universal Connector, which is finally making the process of accessorising a handheld fairly future-proof.

It's Sony who is doing most of the innovating though, with a clutch of colour and monochrome models in the past four months, top of which is the N770C, with high resolution (320x320) bright colour screen, jog-dial, audio player and headphones, plus a Memory Stick expansion slot. There's also the ultra-thin T415, using a monochrome screen but with enhanced speaker and infrared port, the latter allowing the handheld can act reliably as a TV/Video remote control.

Sony has also developed a Memory Stick digital camera, which can be plugged into any of their Palm OS PDAs.

Late last year, Palm bought out Be, best known for their BeOS desktop operating system. It's thought that much of the software talent behind the multimedia BeOS will go into making Palm OS version 5 much more immediately attractive to High Street shoppers.

Andy Nott

The image is a screenshot of the Handspring website's 'Products: Communicators' section. On the left is a vertical navigation menu with links: Home, Products (with a sub-link for Treo Communicators), Software, Enterprise, Developers, About Handspring, Customer Support, and Search. Below the menu is a search bar with a 'Go' button and a 'Power Search' link. The main content area features the title 'Products: Communicators' and a sub-header 'Treo 180'. The central graphic introduces the 'new family of treo communicators' with the tagline 'incredibly compact!'. It displays two devices: the 'Treo 180 series' on the left and the 'Treo 270 series' on the right. A circular inset shows a hand holding a Treo device. A 'View Photo Gallery' link is positioned near the inset. A 'Learn more' link is located below the Treo 180 series device.



Software Shorts

Steve Litchfield takes a look at the latest additions to the world of EPOC software...

Although there's still quite a bit here for EPOC Release 5, the flood of program conversions for the Nokia 9210 has well and truly started. I still don't personally believe it to be a natural upgrade for many Palmtop readers but I'll round-up some of the new releases in a moment for those who've taken the plunge.

As time goes on, of course, the scope of this column will have to widen still. Nokia's keyboardless 7650 smartphone also uses Symbian's ER6 and can accept third party applications, although only having 4MB of memory will rather restrict what's possible. And it's to be hoped that other Symbian licensees will also start to come good with exciting new EPOC-powered products.

Quite how 'compatible' software will prove to be between the different ER6 variants remains to be seen but, as ever, 'Shareware' Shorts will adapt to report new applications as appropriate.

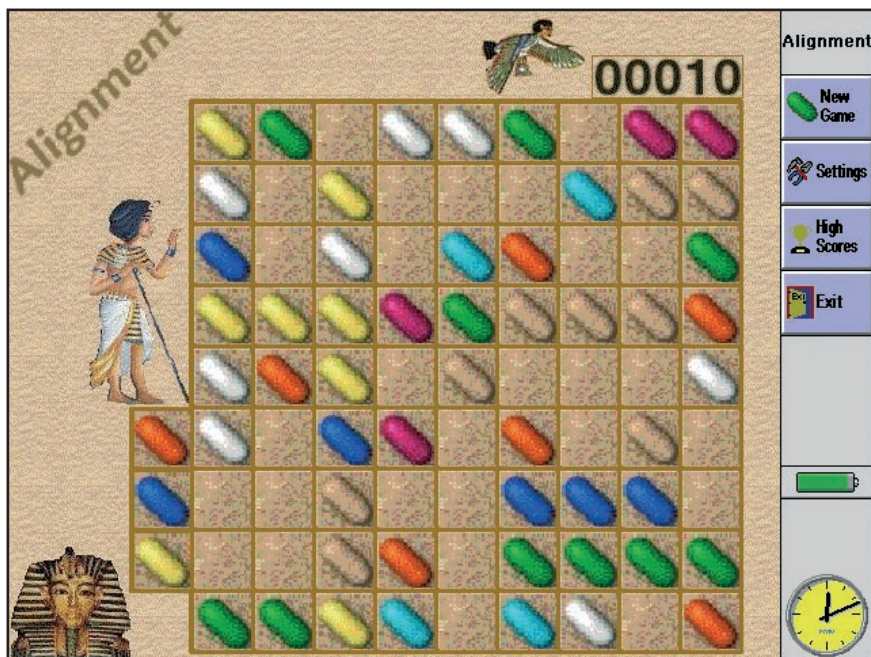
You'll have noticed the new title for this feature. I'm going to stop using the term 'shareware' except where necessary, as

the vast majority of commercial software released these days tends to have effectively the same distribution model as modern shareware: i.e. a trial version that either expires after a month or has some vital features restricted. I'll resist getting on my soapbox and reminding everybody that true shareware was always supposed to be 100% fully working. Apart from a few success stories, history has proven that the vast majority of people *don't* register willingly and need extra motivation via the functionality of the program itself.

Thus, the programs described below are either freeware or they're not. And if not, you can still expect to download something to try out from the web site quoted in the text.

Win, win, win!

Alignment, from David Steer, is a challenging new puzzle game that offers real rewards. Pocket IQ is running a limited duration high score challenge for all those players who register the game. Prizes will be awarded for the top and runner-up



Puzzling your way to a cash prize, in Alignment

scores, and a special prize will be awarded randomly to one of the registered players. The size of the prize fund will depend on the number of registered players, but is expected to be around £500 by the time you read this.

www.pocketiq.com

HTML on the go

An old, old freeware resource has just been fixed up for 2002. Russ Spooner's old web page construction suite, **HTMLEdit** (which I took over for a while in 1999), has now had the bugs knocked out of it and been generally overhauled by Trygve Henriksen. There are libraries of tags, which can be applied standalone or around existing selected text,

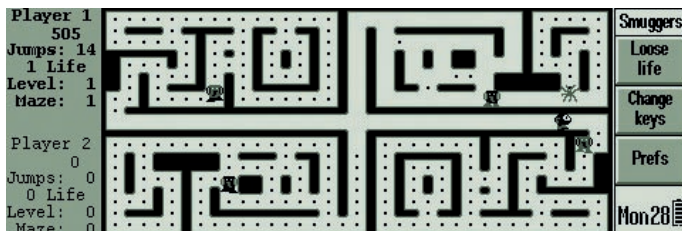


*HTMLEdit
lives!*



*Strippoker
running on
the Series 5*

*Watch out for
the elephants!
—Smuggers*



and there's integration with Psion's Web browser for previewing. Incidentally, the project is 'Open Source' should any other programmers fancy a challenge.

home.c2i.net/trygveh/english/download

Stripped!

Cherrysoft has produced another take on the idea of Strip Poker—and yet again, the focus is definitely on the poker side rather than the stripping. The developers claim that each computer opponent has different levels of Poker skill, which adds an interesting dimension, though note that the default lady is distinctly cautious. **Strippoker** is slickly programmed, with atmospheric photos to go with the title, although you have to get through a lot of poker play before anything much gets revealed in glorious monochrome!

www.cherrysoft.be

Elephant monster alert

Smuggers is a new PacMan-like arcade game by Roberto Colistete. As you might imagine, it's all about eating dots around a variety of mazes and trying to stay away from the (elephant) monsters. When almost all the dots are eaten, the giant spider starts blinking and that's your cue to try to catch it within 10 seconds and so move onto the next level/maze. Smuggers is nicely configurable and well done within the limitations of the Psion screen.

www.pocketiq.com

EYENTKBCER

Or, Everything You Ever Need To Know But Can't Ever Remember. Well, almost. My own 3-Lib freeware **Trivopaedia** is an updated revamp of the original Trivia project, with hundreds of entries guaranteed to help your team win the pub quiz on

MP3 on your Psion?

It was only a couple of issues ago that I wrote in Q&A that MP3 sound playback on a Series 5mx or Revo was a non-starter. Alexander Zavorine has had a stab at proving me wrong, although there are still some hurdles to overcome. The (freeware, beta) **EPlayM** plays back standard MP3 music files over the standard Psion 'speaker', running as a console application (i.e. no Extras bar icon) and cleverly taking its playlist from MP3 files found in a 'Music' folder in the top level directory.

Traditional MP3 music is encoded in 16-bit stereo at 128kBit/second, yielding file sizes around a megabyte per minute. The Psion hardware has nowhere near enough performance (both electronically and acoustically) to do this near 'CD-quality' music justice, so the encoding can be relaxed slightly, down to mono 56kBit/second, with file sizes at around 420K per minute. EPlayM does the files proud, with surprising quality, although to a certain extent it's the sheer novelty factor tending to fool the ears.

Switching away from EPlayM demonstrates that music can be left playing in the background, but unfortunately any significant demands that you make on the Psion's processor mean a slight interruption in playback. Luckily, word processing or working in Sheet or Jotter are all sufficiently undemanding to leave EPlayM enough processor headroom.

It's at this point that you realise two things. Firstly, 420K/min isn't significantly less than the space requirement of standard EPOC sound files, so the use of MP3 hasn't gained you very much. Secondly, the figure is still large enough that storing significant quantities of music is only going to be practical on CF expansion disks, the bandwidth to which prohibits smooth playback—music files are broken up horrendously on a Series 5mx.

Early days for EplayM then, but don't hold your breath. If you want MP3 on EPOC right now, you'll have to move up to the Nokia 9210. Personally, I went out and spent £30 on a small CF-based MP3 player, where the quality is a lot better (via headphones) and it runs for 20 hours or so on a pair of AA batteries.

www.geocities.com/alexander_zavorine/epoc

```
Sound device capabilities:
Rate range: 8000 - 8000Hz
Buffer size range: 16 - 1048576 bytes
Volume range: 0 - 4
Channels: 1
Encodings: 8BitALaw
Sound device parameters:
Channels: 1
Rate: 8000Hz
Buffer size: 8192 bytes
Encoding: 8BitALaw
Playing c:\Music\Track08.mp3 (22.05 kHz, mono, 56 kbps, 211 sec) ...
```

247 sq.km to sq.miles		Entry 247 Answer 95.347		M in	M+	M-	MR	ER
95.347				3 dp	Rev	7	8	9
Level 1	PBconvert version 1.4			X	4	5	6	
Area	sq.km to sq.miles	sq.miles to acres		÷	1	2	3	
Area	hectares to sq.miles	sq.metres to sq.miles		+	0	.	C	
Length	sq.metres to acres	hectares to sq.metres		-	=			
Volume	hectares to acres							
Capacity	About	Help	Exit					

PDconvert
proves its
usefulness on
the Series 5

Friday night—if nobody spots you cheating, that is!

3lib.ukonline.co.uk

Under the hood

Extremely useful for troubleshooting application installations (and removals) is Ralph Sprenger's freeware **OPXscan**, also mentioned in our Q&A section on page 66. It scans your Psion disks for applications and looks inside each to establish which system OPX libraries they need. It then produces an alphabetic listing of OPXes, detailing where each is installed and whether each is still used. A tap on the 'Info' button brings up a dialog with exact details of the relevant applications that use the OPX.

www.pSIONwelt.de/ralphsprenger/RSPProgs.htm

Free conversions

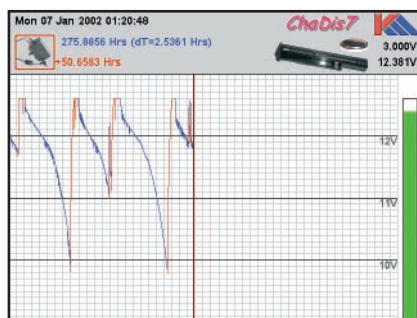
Newly updated, **PBconvert** is a freeware conversion calculator from Philip Bister with an entirely pen-driven interface. The program can be used as a basic calculator in its own right, but also contains a host of useful conversion categories.

philipbister@ukonline.co.uk

Series 7/netBook owners only

ChaDis7, from Kevin Millican, is tailored specifically to the Series 7 and netBook's battery charging system. This freeware utility runs in the background and monitors the battery voltage, producing reports and graphs of your battery condition. Ultimately, as with the author's Revo version, ChaDis7 should be able to make predictions about remaining battery life before a recharge is necessary.

kevin.millican.net



**Keeping a close eye on the Series 7
battery with ChaDis7**

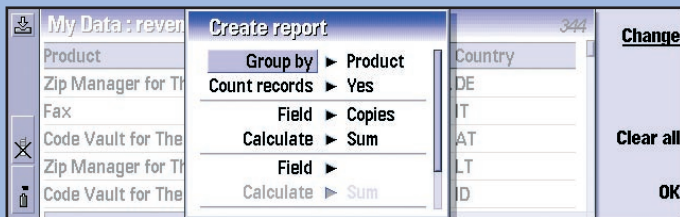
Nokia 9210 software (ER6)



Data on steroids

Power Data, from EpocWare, is a database management system (DBMS) for the Nokia 9210, allowing you to capture, store and retrieve information. You can have multiple tables in a single database, any of which can be viewed in Card or List view. There's a wide range of tools for managing databases, including finding, sorting and filtering records. A useful reporting tool lets you calculate a summary of any field in a table, finding minimum, maximum and average values of any field. Finally, you can group all records in a table by any field and calculate the number of records in each group.

www.epocware.com

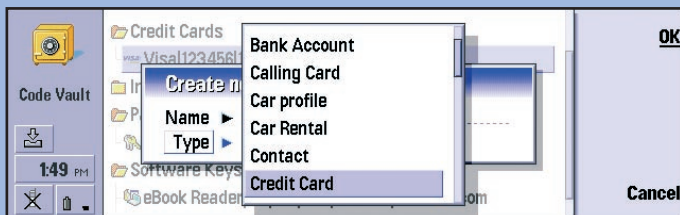


Grouping records together in Power Data

Keeping it safe

Also by EpocWare is **Code Vault**, the concept of which you'll be very familiar with in the modern age. Where do you keep *your* mass of passwords and confidential numbers? Code Vault offers a securely encrypted database with 25 pre-made information forms (Internet passwords, insurance details, bank accounts, etc.) and the ability to create your own forms if required.

www.epocware.com

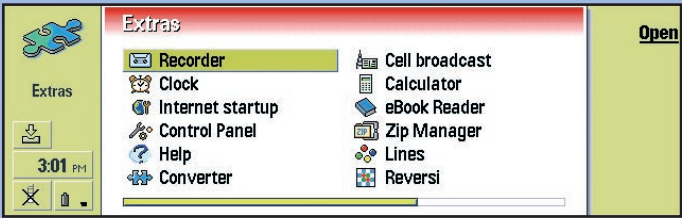


Selecting an information form in Code Vault

Ringin the changes

EpocWare again, this time with **Colors**, designed for any 9210 Communicator owners who are bored with the standard blue-themed colour scheme. Colors offers up to eight replacement schemes and you can preview each before you reboot into your chosen scheme.

www.epocware.com

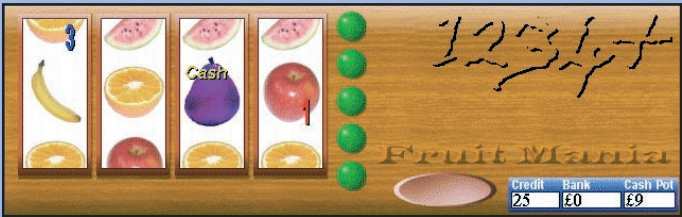


The 'Brick' theme in Colors

Fruit mad

RMR Software has ported its fruit machine simulation, **RMRFruit**, to the 9210. It's colourful, fun and addictive, but I'm sorry to have to tell you that the money you win isn't real...

www.rmrsoft.com



No winline this time in RMRFruit

What have you got?

RMRHome, also from RMR Software, has always been a rather under-rated application, perhaps because of the effort needed to gather and maintain data for it. Taking your home room by room, every item can be named, noted and valued, with RMRHome totting up

Item Breakdown					Room : Lounge
Date	Description	Category	Reference	Value	Rooms
09 Aug 01	Settee	Furniture		700.00	Category
18 Aug 01	Love Seat	Furniture		600.00	
09 Aug 01	Armchair	Furniture		500.00	
18 Aug 01	Television	Electrical	2345-6543	332.00	
12 Aug 01	Hi-Fi Unit	Furniture		114.56	
18 Aug 01	Carpet	Furniture		2541.00	
Totals :				6 items 4787.56	Items
					Close

Setting up an inventory in RMRHome

room and home totals as you go. The information is not only useful in the event of an insurance claim, it's also invaluable as a way of keeping track of which items are where and their model and serial numbers.

www.rmrsoft.com

It was *this* big!

Digital Red's **Fisherman** is (believe it or not) a fishing simulation. Quoting the developers, "You can stroll the fingerling and tame it chicly, or you can fight the feral shark, driving the excitement." Don't ask me about the spelling, I'm no fishing expert! There's an online fishing club, where you can publish your records or arrange a virtual match with your friends. All very impressive, but I thought half the fun of fishing was doing it for real in the cold and wet?

www.worldup.com/products/fisherman/index.htm



Proof!
—landing the
big one in
Fisherman

Swords and savagery

Redshift's **Dragonfire** is a traditional RPG (Role Playing Game) in every way, complete with cheesy medieval fonts and personae. Redshift claim hundreds of different monsters and hundreds more separate objects to discover, collect and use.

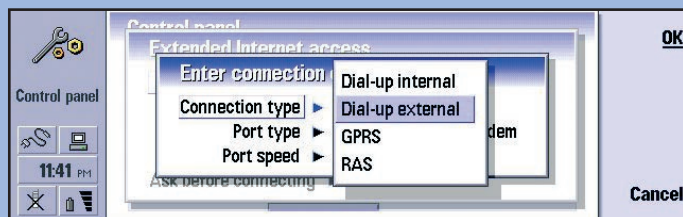
redshift.itworks.hu



**The
Dragonfire
RPG**

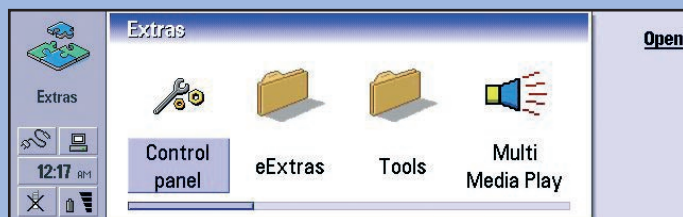
Cut those phone charges!

PsiLOC+ has recently released a trilogy of useful utilities with similar names. **Extended Internet** implements an Internet connection in the 9210 via GPRS (using an external, GPRS-enabled phone via infrared), via external landline modem or via RAS. After installation, you create a new Internet Access Point using Extended Internet's applet in the 9210's Control Panel.



Using the 9210 with an external modem, thanks to Extended Internet

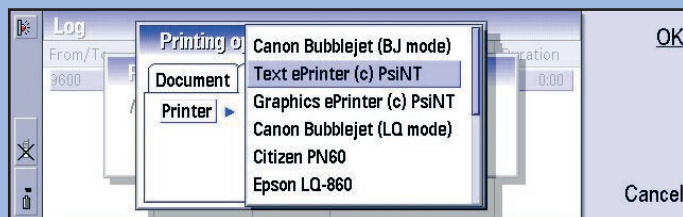
PsiLOC+'s **Extended Extras** lets you create custom folders, in which you can store your third party applications, arranging them in separate categories, e.g. Games, Utilities, Emulators, Finance, etc.



Grouping your Extras in Extended Extras

Finally, **Extended Printers** means that you don't need a special infrared-equipped printer to take advantage of your 9210's printing capabilities. Extended Printers can be used in any application that has a Print command. Printing to graphic or text files allows you to use your PC's printer just as if it was connected directly to your Communicator.

www.psiloc.com

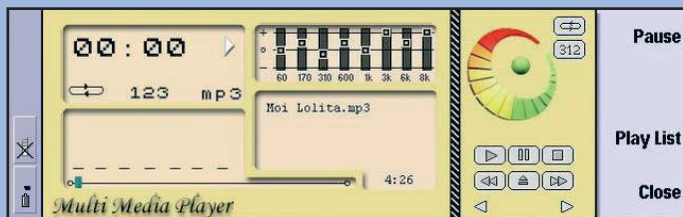


Setting up to print via Extended Printers

Better music

Also by PsiLOC+ is **Multi Media Player**, which can play a wide range of formats including WAV and MP3. It has a fully customizable playlist, sampler and equalizer. You can play, pause and stop, start playing from any point, equalize and change the volume.

www.psiloc.com



Music playing under EPOC never looked (or sounded) this good

Chat away!

If your GSM phone bill isn't a problem, you'll like MidletSoft's **Mercury Instant Messenger**, an Internet chat client compatible with Yahoo!, ICQ, MSN and other proprietary chat clients. The program is currently in final beta testing and runs under the 9210's PersonalJava platform.

www.midletsoft.com



About to chat away with Mercury Instant Messenger

Doomed

Brand new to ER6 is the ever popular **Doom (9210)**, from WildPalm. The EPOC port of this classic can use game files from the desktop original, plays at full-screen or in 'original' aspect ratio and includes professional sound support.

www.wildpalm.co.uk



Hunting for ghouls in Doom 9210

Meltdown

Staying with WildPalm, **Meltdown** has a similar feel to Doom, but with a plot and character of its own in a mission to steal enemy reactor fuel cells. Programmed to use 4096-colour mode and featuring full 4-channel arcade sound, this also features genuine artificial intelligence for the enemy.

www.wildpalm.co.uk



Collecting fuel pods in Meltdown

What is shareware?

Written by professional programmers and enthusiasts, shareware is often supplied for use on a 30 day trial basis. If you like the software you are asked to send a payment to the author. Some programs are freeware and don't require any payment at all. Each program comes complete with information about how to install and use it, and how to pay for it.

Where can I find it?

One way to get any of these programs is from the Internet. If you've got access to the web then there are several on-line indices (e.g. at www.epocsoftware.com) which link directly to the relevant author download page concerned. Things are just as easy if you haven't got Internet access: as long as the program has been out for a few months, you should find a copy on the latest edition of the Palmtop CD-ROM, indexed into the appropriate category.

How do I use it?

Once you've found the file you want, there are three steps you may need to take:

1. Decompress the file, if necessary. Most applications on our Palmtop CD will already have been decompressed for you, but those on the Internet will almost certainly be 'zipped', to save bandwidth. If you've never seen a ZIP file before, install an unzipping utility onto your desktop or palmtop computer. For PC users, the most common is WinZIP (which can be found on most PC magazine CD cover disks); for Macintosh users, try Ziplt; for EPOC itself, get RMRZip (from www.rmrsoft.com). Once installed, you can double-click on any downloaded ZIP file and it will be automatically expanded into its component parts.
2. Examine the files available. Most programs come with a welcoming README.TXT file, which you can read in any text editor or word processor. This should explain how to install the application and how to register it. Sometimes the latter is described inside the program's help screens instead. Well-behaved EPOC applications come as one or more SIS files, e.g. 'mygame.sis'. These can be double-clicked on to install them directly using a serial (PsiWin) link to your palmtop. If you experience problems at this stage, it's worth noting that you can also copy SIS files onto your palmtop and double-tap on them there instead, from the System screen.
3. The newly installed program will automatically appear on the Extras bar. Press the 'Extras' application icon to check and to launch the software.

Shareware availability

Please note that, by definition, many of the latest shareware and freeware items featured in Software Shorts will *not* appear on existing Palmtop CDs, but on subsequent pressings of the disk. To find the latest version of the programs mentioned here, go to the relevant author's web site as given in the text.

The vast majority of EPOC (ER5) applications mentioned in Software Shorts run properly on the Psion Series 7/netBook, Series 5/5mx, Revo/Revo Plus/Diamond Mako and compatibles, unless otherwise stated. If a program misbehaves on *your* EPOC computer, check the author's web site first and then email them if necessary. Nokia 9210 software will only run on Nokia 9210/9290 Communicators.



A Closer Look

...at some of the newest and most interesting products

Star Ratings:

★★★★★	Excellent
★★★★☆	Good
★★★☆☆	Average
★★★☆☆	Fair
★★☆☆*	Poor
☆☆☆☆*	Dismal

Interpreting reviews

Quality: the *Quality* star rating reflects how well the product works, whether it includes all the features you'd expect, whether the interface is consistent and easy to use, and in data-based software products it also reflects the quality of the information contained in the program.

Value: the *Value* star rating reflects the value for money of the product, taken within the context of what the program (or other product) does. Therefore a simple utility program will be rated differently to a sophisticated application at the same price.

Does it work on my palmtop?

Items reviewed should work with the Psion Revo and Revo Plus/Diamond Mako, Series 5/5mx, Series 7/netBook, netpad and Ericsson MC218 unless otherwise specified, though some programs may not currently support colour or utilise the full screen size of the Series 7 and netBook/netpad.

Programs *may* run on the Oregon Scientific Osaris, though part of the display may be clipped due to the Osaris' smaller 320x200 pixel screen. Osaris users should always consult the program developer before purchasing.

Psion netpad

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SmallBase

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Psion netpad

Before going into details of the new Psion/Teklogix netpad, it's important to be aware that this device isn't primarily designed for the retail market, but as a tool for corporate use, primarily in the areas of warehouse data logging, on-site data collection and so on.

That said, for certain kinds of hobbyist use, the ruggedised netpad has much to recommend it, not least that it runs the EPOC ER5 operating system, identical to that powering all Series 5mx, Revo, and Series 7/netBooks. Despite the lack of a (real) keyboard, our tests have shown the netpad to be able to run virtually all ER5 software, making it practically 100 percent compatible with all the software you'll read about in Palmtop (ER6/Nokia 9210 excluded, of course).

As far as the netpad's designers were concerned, compatibility with the existing Psion software base probably didn't even warrant consideration. The device was designed as a natural complement to the existing industrial Workabout range. Physically larger, at 215 x 85mm (8.47 x 3.35"), as much as possible of the frontal area of the netpad is occupied by the 640x240 pixel

($\frac{1}{4}$ VGA) 256 colour screen. The netpad is currently available in two models: the 1100, which is the base model, and the 3500 (unavailable for review), which adds a four-way navigation button to the left of the screen and two programmable soft keys situated along the bottom of the screen.

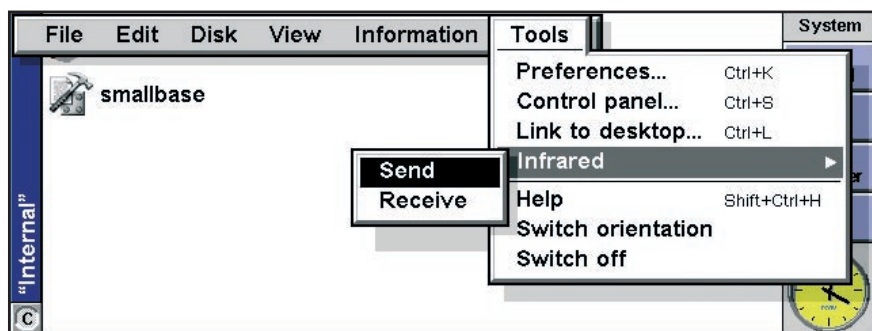
The 3500 also comes with a built-in barcode scanner, with its 'eye' located at the far end of the device, plus a higher-capacity battery pack. The barcode scanner supports most common barcode standards. Though not available in the initial release, future 3500 models will also have the option of either 802.11b wireless LAN or GSM/GPRS/Mobitex/CDPD WAN radio access built-in.

Both models are fitted with an Intel SA-1110 StrongARM processor running at 206MHz, 16MB of RAM, 16MB of internal flash ROM, and an MMC (MultiMedia Card) slot for removable data storage.

The 1100 model weighs in at 508g (1.12 lb) and is 25mm (0.99") thick, while the 3500 is a little bulkier at 580g (1.3 lb) and 35mm (1.37") thick.

Included in the package is a suitably solid, robust-looking docking cradle, which is





The familiar face of EPOC ER5, with a few (minor) menu changes here and there

used as a charging station for the Lithium-ion battery pack while in situ in the netpad. The cradle is a superbly constructed piece of kit, with three indicator LEDs on the front: a red one to indicate the presence of mains power, another that glows red or green, depending upon the charging status of the handheld, and a third (yellow) that

flickers reassuringly whenever data is being transferred across the RS232 Serial link. The netpad locks securely into place into the cradle, which makes it suitable for vertical wall mounting if desired—something for which appropriate screw holes have thoughtfully been provided.



If you're away from the cradle, the RS232 connector can be plugged directly into the netpad instead—an eminently logical and useful idea.

Desktop connectivity is via a completely standard PsiWin link, or via MacConnect if you're using an Apple Macintosh. The standard infrared port is also present, and you can of course beam files back and forth between the netpad and any other ER5 Psion computer.

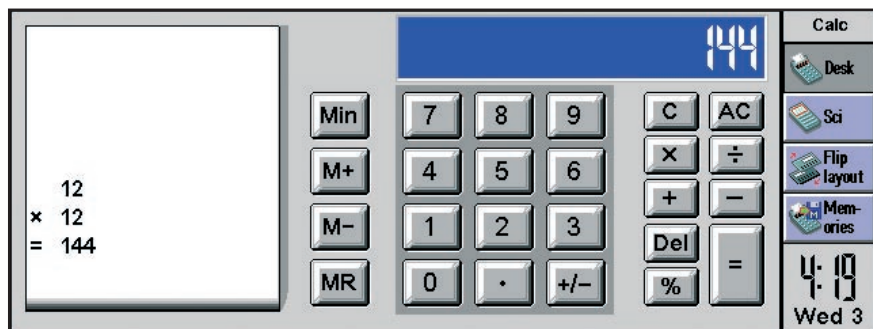
Going back to the handheld device itself, Series 7 and netBook users will recognise the screen as almost identical in width to the one they're used to, but almost exactly half the height. The processor is slightly faster than that on the (190MHz) netBook, though not noticeably so in operation.

As with the netBook, the netpad is sold without any software loaded in its standard configuration, but units are supplied with all the standard ER5 applications (Word, Sheet, Data, Jotter, and so on) on an accompanying CD. Remember that this wasn't designed with the end-user retail customer in mind, and the vast majority of netpads will be sold to corporate clients as bespoke solutions, with custom software pre-loaded by the reseller. In these cases, enterprise clients will hardly want to encourage their netpad-equipped workforce to load up and run their own PIM applications.

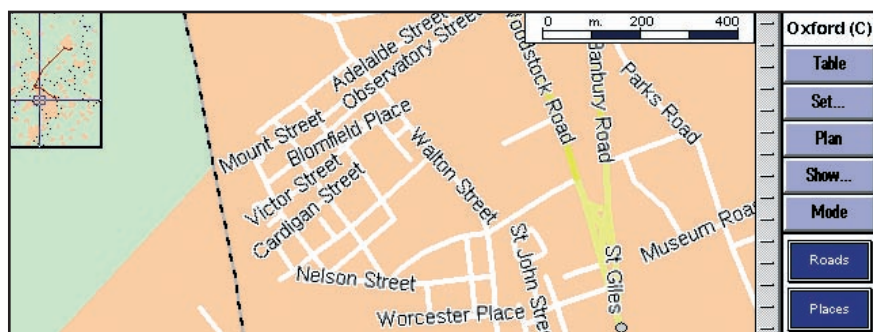
Perhaps the most significant feature of the netpad is its extreme ruggedness. Designed to cope with a wide range of temperature and humidity extremes and to be able to withstand a 1.5 metre (5 foot) drop onto concrete, this handheld computer is designed to take *serious* day-to-day punishment. The (removable) battery pack will last for a full day's operation without recharging,



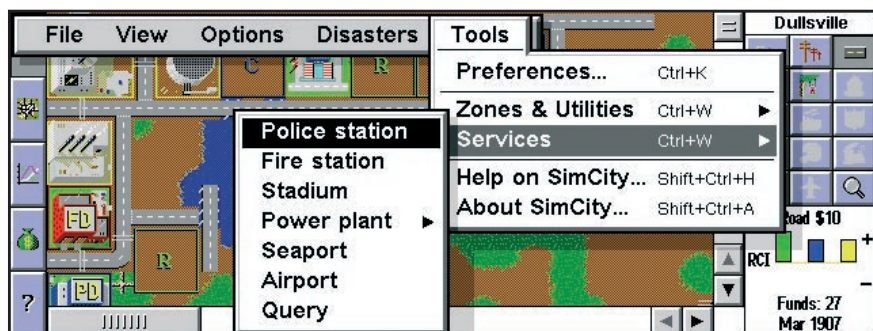
The screen can be switched to either horizontal or vertical operation



All the familiar EPOC apps can be loaded from the netpad's accompanying CD...



...and all third-party ER5 software (including Street Planner), should run just fine



The world's most expensive GameBoy? SimCity running happily on the netpad



and an integral, rechargeable backup cell will power the machine for a further 48 hours before data loss finally occurs.

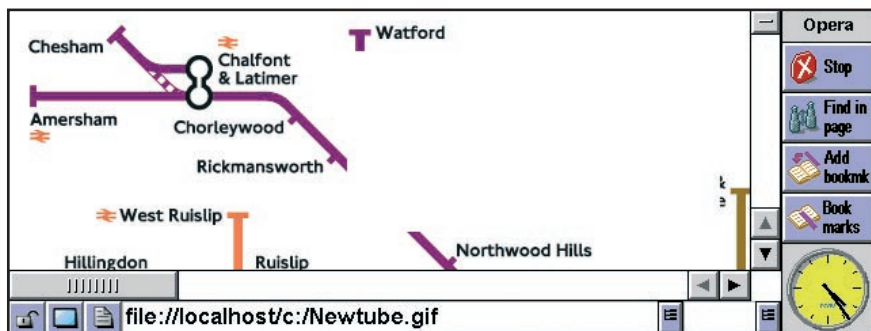
The lack of a physical keyboard is of course a significant factor when considering data input on any device, though most custom data collection applications created for corporate netpad customers will tend to rely more on tapping check-boxes and selecting from pick lists than on entering large amounts of text. For instances where text input is required, a special command icon on the right edge of the screen invokes 'Psiboard', a pop-up virtual keyboard that runs on top of whatever application you're currently working with.

The Psiboard is delightfully configurable and can be dragged around the screen, minimised to a tiny strip, or dragged out to absolutely any size you like. There are also at least 15 keyboard types available

via a couple of screen taps: from standard QWERTY to foreign languages, Dvorak, numeric, time, time offset, latitude/longitude, plus user-defined layouts.

Although nobody is likely to buy a netpad for writing lengthy business reports (any more than you would a keyboardless Palm OS or Pocket PC device for this purpose), the Psiboard allows surprisingly fast text input with a little practice, and would be a nice feature to see on the 5mx, for entering text in situations where the ambient light is too dim to see the main keyboard clearly.





Running the Opera web browser

Overall, it's extremely difficult to find fault with the design of the netpad. It's virtually bomb proof, runs perhaps the most robust operating system ever seen on a handheld device (i.e. EPOC Release 5), can be programmed in C++, Java or OPL, runs virtually all existing Psion software, has a clear, bright screen and is eminently expandable. For those using the netpad out of doors in fairly bright sunlight, it suffers the malaise that afflicts all backlit colour screens, in that it darkens as the light gets brighter, ultimately becoming unreadable in very bright sunlight. For these users the option of a frontlit screen would most certainly be preferable, which although

far dimmer in indoor lighting conditions, would at least remain readable in very bright sunlight.

If you're an existing Psion user with the need for a super-robust portable device then the netpad may well fit the bill. With prices starting at around £1000 it will only appeal to *serious* users, but if you're an archeologist, sailor, pot-holer, rally driver, mountain climber or take part in any one of a thousand other outdoor professions and pastimes, a netpad may be the only thing that will survive your active lifestyle.

Steve Clack



netpad

From: www.pSIONteklogix.com

Availability: Now

Price: Around £1000 upwards

Quality ★★★★★

Value ★★★★★

SmallBase

If there's one product that the EPOC world has been in dire need of these past years then it's a good database manager. The built-in Psion Data application is perfect as a quick and simple tool to create, edit and view simple databases, but for serious work it's sadly lacking in features.

Purple Software's PowerBase relational database product that appeared back in 1998 was a powerful tool for developers, but rather doomed to failure in the consumer market by virtue of its over-complex and quirky interface. What the average Psion user has really been crying out for is something with more power and flexibility than Data, but without the frighteningly steep learning curve and relatively high price tag of PowerBase.

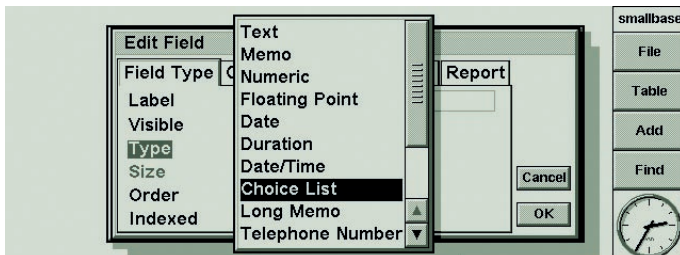
Astonishingly, Eric Sebban's shareware SmallBase has gone from its first release back in early November last year, through no fewer than 13 updates in the space of less than three months, taking it to version 2.8 at the time of going to press. Far from being a series of bug fixes, this impressive string of updates reflects a serious ongoing effort to develop the product and add useful new features. It's still not the perfect database product as yet, but it offers a

wealth of powerful features that appear to be expanding on an almost weekly basis.

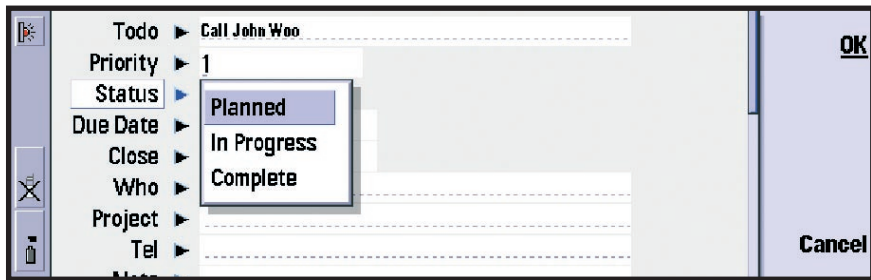
Better still, the price of £20 is low enough to earn it a place on almost every serious Psion owner's palmtop, and it runs happily on every EPOC model, from Revo and Oregon Osaris upwards, and including the ER6-based Nokia 9210 communicator. The latter is particularly significant as, unlike the Psion ER5 range, the 9210 comes without any built-in database application of its own.

When starting out with SmallBase, you must of course create your new databases before proceeding further. It's important to appreciate that SmallBase goes far beyond the built-in Data application in terms of its capabilities, but that doesn't make it any less suitable for handling your existing (simple) database files that have been created in Data. Although it's not possible to import databases with complex formatting intact, SmallBase allows basic import from comma separated text (CSV, as used to export from Data), FoxPro or dBase files. Database records can also be merged in from other SmallBase files.

When transferring files from Data via the CSV route, it's necessary to create a corresponding database structure in SmallBase first, matching all the field headings and formats to suit and configuring the export from Data to enclose each field in



SmallBase offers an impressive (though not exhaustive) array of field types



Perhaps most useful of all field types, 'Choice List' offers drop-down pick lists

double quotes. On our own test files, the import procedure into SmallBase tended to be very slow, taking several seconds to process each record.

If you do decide to keep a lot of databases in SmallBase format, it's worth noting that the program only allows you to open one file at a time, which is obviously far less convenient than keeping all your commonly-used database files open simultaneously.

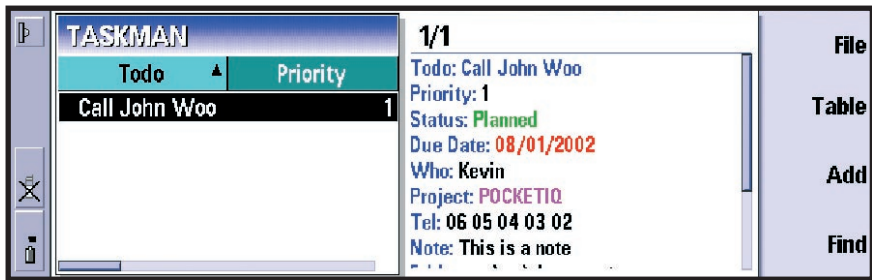
For storing information, SmallBase takes a slightly different approach to Data, and one that database novices will take a little while to get accustomed to. Rather than simply showing all data fields in a single, flat layout, SmallBase uses the concept of data 'tables'. Each database file can contain multiple tables, with each one offering different views on the same set of data. As an example, you could keep a database of your DVD collection, with one table showing the titles and a basic description of each film, with a second table showing the same titles, but with details on the disk region, running time, extra features, and so on.

In terms of the types of data that can be entered, this is an area where SmallBase really scores over the Data application. Field types include all the usual text, number, floating point, date and memo

types, but with the addition of 'Duration', which allows times to be entered in hours and minutes, 'Telephone number', which allows SmallBase to generate DTMF tones to dial a number, 'Formula', which allows you to perform calculations on other fields in the database. There's also 'File List' and 'Folder List', which allow you to launch applications or documents directly from SmallBase. Thus you could even build a custom file launcher application entirely within SmallBase!

Perhaps most significant and useful of the extra field types though is 'Choice List', which allows you to create custom pick lists from which you can quickly select an entry option, rather than having to enter the text in full every time. This feature alone will make SmallBase a must-have for some users. Sadly there's no 'radio button' field option at present, though given the rate of product development so far, that's something we may well see in a future release.

Table records in SmallBase are presented in two views, 'Card' and 'Grid', which are similar to the Card and List views in Data. The program is immensely configurable throughout, with options such as how text appears for each field (size, bold/italics, fonts, field widths, colours, etc.), and you



SmallBase's Card view, showing the use of colour within fields on a Nokia 9210

can hide some or all of the field labels if you prefer.

There are plenty of keyboard shortcuts to speed things up, with [Tab] switching between windows in the Card view and [Ctrl]+[Tab] switching between tables in a given database. You can even hide or remove the Card view entirely, with preferences being stored separately for each table in each database.

For those new to database software beyond the simple Data application, SmallBase can prove fairly challenging to get to grips with, if only because of the huge number of options it presents. Beginners will find it essential to go through the tutorial in the PDF manual that's supplied with the program, and although the English leaves something to be desired (the program's author is French), it actually offers an excellent introduction to the program. Be warned that there are a few minor errors in the text, but most people will be able to work their way through these.

Some aspects of SmallBase are tricky to fathom at first, and the logic behind the wording on some of the menu options is a little questionable, but it's all workable once you get used to the SmallBase way of describing things. There is a daunting array

of options to be considered when creating fields and configuring a new database, but many of these can safely be ignored in most cases.

The ability to use calculated fields is a major benefit (and one of the many SmallBase features that desktop database users will understandably take for granted). It allows you to add one field where you enter (say) the cost of an item, another where you enter the quantity, and a third where SmallBase will calculate the result by multiplying the cost and quantity fields together.

When working with calculated fields, each variable is assigned a name (r1, r2, r3, etc.), and unfortunately you *must* use these designations—you can't simply use the field names. Thus, a calculated field might be entered as "r1 * r2", rather than a much more straightforward "cost * quantity".

If you're running SmallBase on a Series 7, netBook or Nokia 9210, you can set individual records to display in certain colours, based on criteria that you set. For example, you can assign the text of any record with a date field set to today's date to appear in red, perhaps to remind you that a task is due for action. This is a very powerful feature, and you can set up complex criteria

using logical operators such as AND, OR and LIKE.

Filtering is another powerful database feature that you'll find in SmallBase. Filters work just like colours as described above, but show only records that match the selected criteria, hiding all others from view. The beauty is that you can save each set of filter criteria to use again and again, making it easy to interrogate your databases in a number of ways.

You can use also assign variables to filters and colours, so you'll be prompted to enter a range of dates (or whatever) for which you want the records to appear in a certain colour, or the records to be shown in a filtered view.

The power of SmallBase goes even further though, with an extended search facility, 256-bit passworded encryption of databases, export into CSV or HTML text, printing, and in the latest version, even a basic report generating facility. It's also possible to create alarms within records, though these will only function while SmallBase is running.

Although you can have links between fields in different tables of the same database, no relational links are allowed between separate databases. For the vast majority of users this won't present a real limitation though, and those in need of this level of sophistication will no doubt feel comfortable enough with databases to give Purple Software's PowerBase a try instead.

A small annoyance with the unregistered version of the program is that it only allows 15 records per table to be entered until the registration fee is paid. This is sufficiently limiting that some users may find it difficult

to ascertain the value of the program in such a crippled mode.

All in all, SmallBase is an ambitious project, and one that should be seen very much as a work in progress. The current version has many powerful features and although the interface is a little idiosyncratic in places, it shows great promise. If beginners can get to grips with the basic concepts then they'll find SmallBase a powerful tool that will perform many tasks that simply aren't possible with a lesser program. Those with a little experience of database creation should be able to grasp the basics in under an hour, and then be able to create any simple database within a couple of minutes.

Such is the potential of SmallBase, we'll be running an extended tutorial series on it from the next issue of Palmtop onwards. If you're one of the many readers who feel stifled by the limitations of Data then this series (and SmallBase) will be well worth spending some time with.

Steve Clark

SmallBase

From: www.pocketiq.com or corisoft.free.fr

Availability: Now

Price: £20

Quality ★★★★★☆

Value ★★★★★☆

Keep it RUNNING!

Steve Clack offers some practical advice to help keep your EPOC handheld running well into the 21st century . . .

After Psion's announcement to cease development of new handheld devices back in July of last year, many Psion users have voiced concerns regarding how they might keep their existing EPOC palmtops running for as long as possible. Regardless of the fact that new Psion models may or may not be available in a few years time, the current models are powerful enough to meet most users' portable computing needs for several years to come. The biggest question for many people is not *whether* to stick with their Psion handheld, but *how* to best ensure that it'll keep on running for as long as possible.

Psion support?

Although the quality of Psion's technical support service appears to be getting worse and worse as the months pass, Psion currently claims that the existing EPOC range will continue to be supported until at least the end of 2004. Regardless of

such promises, it's important to be aware that the situation can always change, and it's not of course out of the question that Psion will no longer be with us in 2004, just as it's *theoretically* possible that they may have resumed handheld development at that time.

So, if Psion's promise does indeed hold, you should at least be able to get your palmtop repaired for almost another three years.

Telephone assistance

If you need telephone assistance on a technical Psion-related issue, Psion offers two (chargeable) technical support numbers for English-speaking customers during UK office hours. You can use either +44 906 554 0000 (where calls are charged at £1 per minute), or +44 870 1010700 where you pay the same rate, but can do so by credit card rather than using a premium rate phone number. For telephone technical support in other languages, Psion asks you to refer to www.pSION.com for current details.

Rather than pay Psion's rather high rates, your best bet is to contact either 'PsionMan', (see page 85 for more details) who offers a very reasonable yearly support service, or POS Ltd, who offer a competent by-the-minute support service at £0.50 per minute.

Note also that 3-Lib offers an EPOC training CD (£20, from 3lib.ukonline.co.uk) containing more than three hours of self-contained tutorial movies that will run on any Windows PC.

On the web

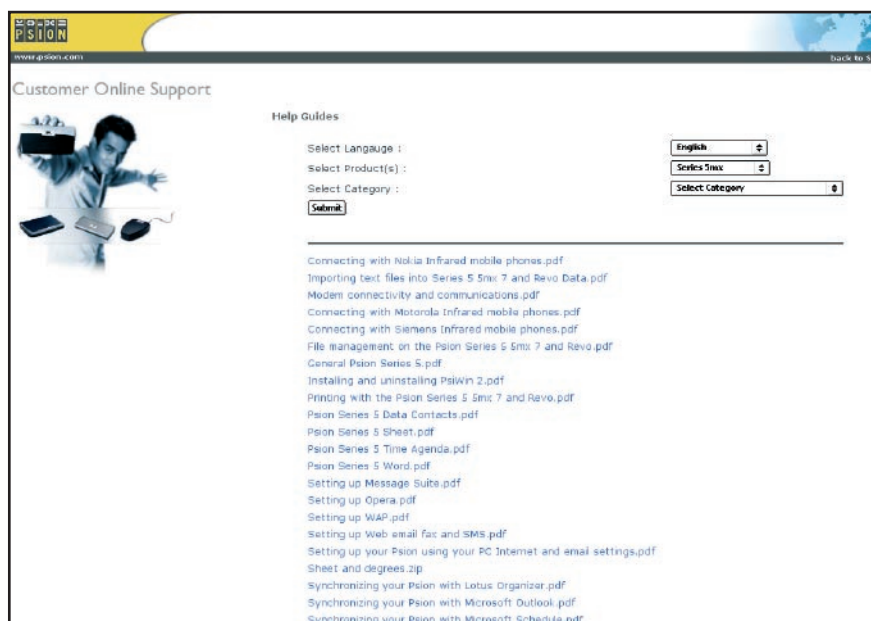
A useful web-based resource for resolving technical issues is Psion's recently-introduced 'MyPsion' pages. These allow you to read, download and print out any of a number of useful documents relating to

a wide variety of common hardware and software issues and frequently asked questions. You'll need to go to www.psim.com/support and enter your details to log into the (free) service. The documents from this site are also available via a 24 hour fax back service (0870 100 3344, but for UK customers only).

If you need Psion's UK Customer Services department, you can currently reach them on 0870 240 3095.

Repairs

Psion currently charges a flat rate of around £100 for repairs in the UK, which is not always cost effective, particularly if you have a fairly old and well-worn machine. A UK-based alternative for hardware repairs is POS Ltd, who have been repairing and



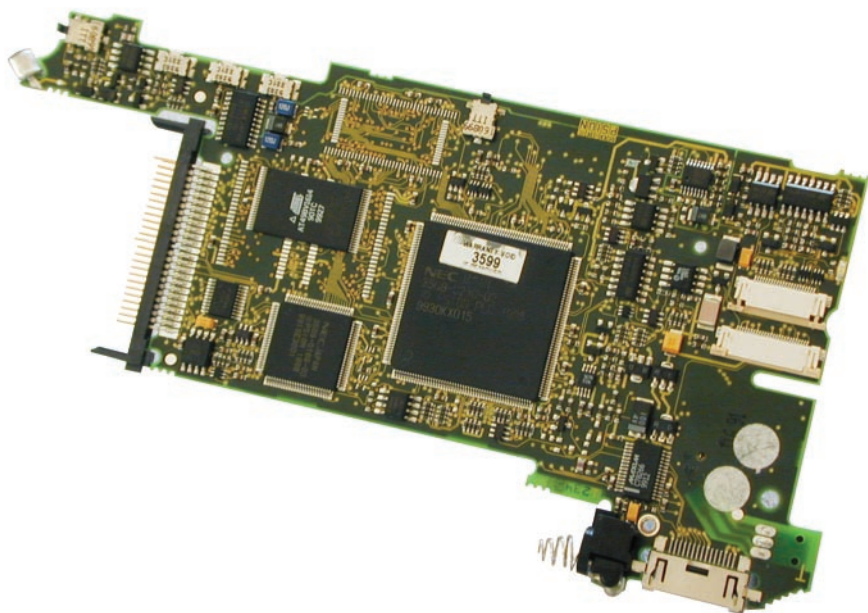
Customer Online Support

Help Guides

Select Language : English
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Psion's useful MyPsion web pages



supporting Psion handhelds for the best part of a decade now, and are likely to do so for some time to come, almost certainly long beyond Psion's 2004 promise.

POS Ltd offers a range of repair services, starting at £65 for any Revo repairs that don't require a replacement screen. POS can be contacted by phone on 0870 52 9246, or you can visit their web site for more details, on www.posltd.com.

In a hurry?

Unfortunately, Psion no longer offers a walk-in service at its Milton Keynes repair centre, instead forcing you to mail your Psion to them (after first making suitable arrangements) and they're currently quoting a 7-10 day turnaround. If you simply can't be without your palmtop for that long,

POS Ltd can usually turn around your repair in a couple of days, and still offer a 2-3 hour 'while you wait' repair service if you give them a couple of days' notice. Of course, if your Psion is still in warranty then you'll *have* to use Psion for the repairs, unless you're prepared to pay *despite* it being within the warranty period. To contact Psion for repairs, call 0870 240 3095 or email psion.repair@psion.com.

Overseas repairs

If you're outside the UK then you have three options if your Psion needs repair:

1. Get the unit repaired by the local Psion service centre nearest to you. Sadly, these centres are gradually disappearing as the months pass, and there may no longer be a repair site in your country.

Check the MyPsion web pages for the latest situation in your country.

2. Arrange to return the unit to Psion in the UK for repair. Again, see the MyPsion web pages for full details of the current procedure.
3. Arrange to return the unit to POS Ltd in the UK for repair.

Buying a spare

Although buying a spare machine just to keep in a drawer in case your main palmtop fails may seem like a rather extreme solution, it makes more sense than you might think. Given the relatively high cost of repairs and the fact that most existing EPOC models can now be purchased quite cheaply new, this option may be worth

considering. If you're looking for a bargain, POS Ltd also offers a selection of refurbished machines at reduced prices, or try PsionEx (see page 79), which also keeps a good range of pre-owned hardware, software and peripherals in stock.

Race-tuning your Psion

Beyond simply keeping your Psion running, it's recently become possible to upgrade the internal memory of certain Psion models. D&G Upgrades (www.pda-upgrade.20m.com) can currently boost an 8MB Revo to 16MB, and a 16MB Series 5mx, Ericsson MC218, Revo Plus or Diamond Mako to either 24 or 28MB. Prices currently range from £50-£75, plus VAT and postage. POS Ltd is also looking



Continued on page 40 . . .

Tips to prolong the life of your Psion

Get a good case

To help prevent damage, *always* invest in a good quality case that provides adequate protection. Hard cases offer the very best protection, and are available from Palmtec (see page 78 for details).

Beware of press-stud cases

A common cause of damage can occur when a screen seems to shatter of its own accord, from the inside out. In most cases, this is not because of faulty parts, but because your Psion has been kept in a leather case with a rather stiff press-stud fastener. Whenever you press on the stud, the metal backing (which usually lies directly above your Psion's screen) allows the pressure to be transmitted directly onto the screen area. Too much pressure and you will crack the LCD from the opposite side. Cases with Velcro fasteners avoid this problem.

Treat your Psion with respect

Your Psion handheld has more computing power than the Apollo spacecraft of the 1960s—even desktop systems five years ago didn't have as much power as the Series 5mx. You wouldn't throw one of *those* machines around, so don't expect your Psion to take that kind of punishment.

Psion handhelds are relatively robust, but there are weak points in the design (such as the hinges and the screen cable), so you should take particular care not to stress these unduly.

The infamous screen cable

Failure of the flexible 'ribbon' cable that connects the screen to the innards of your Psion is the number one fault that appears on poorly-treated units, and it's not an easy job to replace this. Two things will help to prolong the life of this vital component:

1. Always support both the screen and keyboard halves of the 'clamshell' as you open and close your handheld—it's *not* a spectacle case! Allowing the two halves to slam open and shut is a sure-fire way to over-stress the ribbon cable and can even break the hinges.
2. Don't ever expose the machine to excessive moisture. Any water condensing onto the surface of the cable can cause it to stick when you open the case. This can potentially cause a small tear in the cable, requiring a replacement.

The famous pen catch trick

A very common problem that's easy to fix yourself is when a Series 5/5mx pen jams in the mechanism inside the machine. To release it, just slide open the RS232 port cover at the back of the machine. You'll see a small scalloped cutout just beneath the connector socket. Either pull this downwards with your thumb or *gently* put the flat blade of a small screwdriver into the narrow gap and lever the pieces apart by no more than about 3 or 4mm. You should hear a faint click, and the pen will pop out.

(this page of tips kindly supplied by POS Ltd)

into various memory upgrade options for future availability.

Cheap expansion

Prices of CompactFlash disks have been falling steadily since their first appearance around five years ago. If you're wanting to store more and more information on your Psion then there's never been a better time to do it. With 32MB CF disks now available for less than £20, 256MB cards for as little as £100 or so and a massive 512MB storage disk for less than £300, you can now realistically plan to keep all those reference works, encyclopaedias and detailed mapping software on your Psion, with room to spare. The current situation is a far cry from when the Series 5 was first released, and Psion was charging £250 for a 10MB CF disk.

Get your accessories NOW!

If you've been thinking of buying add-on accessories for your Psion: perhaps a memory module for your Series 7, a spare Revo docking cradle or 5mx mains power adaptor, then it makes sense to buy *now*, as the future availability of such things may be uncertain, and prices have never been lower. Look online for good bargains.

And software too!

Although most shareware and freeware is likely to remain available for download for some time to come, not to mention being put onto Palmtop magazine CDs, some commercial Psion-related software packages have already been withdrawn from the retail channel. These include Presentation Maker and the MacConnect Apple connectivity software, which can now only be found on the second-hand market.

Getting to grips with Macro5

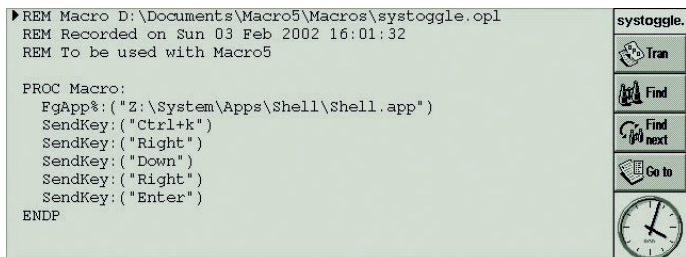
In the fifth part of this ongoing series, Steve Clack delves further into one of EPOC's most powerful third party utilities

Last time around, we created a simple multi-step macro to switch to the System screen, toggle the 'Show hidden files' and 'Show System folder' options from the Preferences dialog, then close down the dialog box when finished, taking us back into the System screen (known to EPOC as the 'Shell').

In the process of creating this relatively simple shortcut, Macro5 cleverly generated a small quantity of OPL-like program code, describing exactly the operations it performed, neatly and in sequence. First off, let's take a look at this 'program code', and try to fathom out what it means.

To view this, you'll first need to go into the folder where Macro5 stores all its macros. We set this up way back at the beginning of the series which, if you followed our suggested settings, will be in a folder called 'Macros', nested within the 'Documents' folder on either your 'C:' or 'D:' drive.

Go into this folder, and locate the file called 'systoggle.opl', which we created in the last instalment. Open this file, which will launch your Psion's built-in OPL program editor, displaying the text contained within the macro.



Viewing the text of our earlier macro in the OPL editor

What does it mean?

Taking the lines of the text from the top, here's an explanation of every word:

- ▶ The first three lines, all starting with 'REM', are simply REMarks—describing the location of the file you're looking at, the date the macro was recorded and a standard third line, stating that this particular piece of OPL is to be used with Macro5, rather than being a regular OPL program.
- ▶ The line 'PROC Macro:' also appears at the beginning of every macro, and simply marks the start of the program code, which in OPL terms is classed as a 'Procedure'—hence the word 'PROC'.
- ▶ The first line of the macro itself, starting 'FgApp%: ("Z:\System...' corresponds to the part where we told Macro5 to switch to the System screen before proceeding further, to avoid the potentially dangerous situation of playing the subsequent keystrokes out of context. The 'FgApp%:' part tells Macro5 to switch to (or launch, if it's not already open) whatever program is at the location described in the parentheses directly following it—in this case the System screen 'application' (otherwise known as 'shell.app'). By changing the bit in the parentheses at the end of this line, it would be possible to tell Macro5 to run and switch to any application located on any of your Psion disks or in the internal ROM. The 'Fg' part refers to 'foreground', because by switching to the specified program, the EPOC operating system will bring it to the foreground, i.e. it will be the one that you see on screen, regardless of what else may be running in the background.

- ▶ With the System screen now in the foreground, the following five lines that all start with 'SendKey:' are merely mimicking the keystrokes you entered with the keyboard: "Ctrl+k" to bring up the Preferences dialog, "Right", "Down" and "Right" to correspond to the relevant arrow keys, and finally "Enter", which closed the dialog box.
- ▶ The very last line of the macro, 'ENDP', tells your Psion that the procedure is complete (it's short for END Procedure).

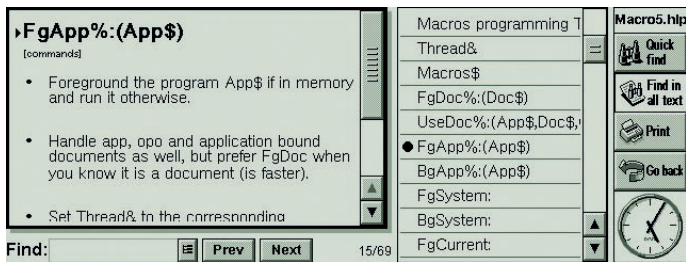
One you've finished examining the macro, just close the OPL editor without saving any changes.

OPL versus OPO

The OPL file that we were examining is actually *not* the program code that Macro5 'runs' whenever you activate your 'Systoggle' macro, but the editable text of the procedure before it's been translated into a runnable 'program'. You may recall that at the end of last issue's instalment we tapped the 'Tran' button in the OPL editor to TRANslate the OPL into an OPO program that Macro5 could then run. The act of *translating* converts all our legible lines of OPL into a 'tokenised' language that your Psion can understand.

If ever you want to modify a macro within the OPL editor, it's necessary to re-open the relevant OPL file and then TRANslate it into an OPO file, thus overwriting the previous OPO of the same name.

Strictly speaking, if you're sure that you're never going to modify a macro, you can safely delete its corresponding OPL file from your macro folder. Be warned though,



A useful source of information—Macro5's own help file

as it's not possible to translate an OPO file back into editable OPL, so if you *do* decide to make changes at a later date, you'll be forced to do the whole thing again from scratch. This isn't much of a problem with the simple sequence we recorded in the last instalment, but for a more complex macro it could be a major job.

Your Macro5 reference

We've only looked at a few macro keywords so far—Macro5 has a vocabulary of more than 50 of them. Although many of these are either of very limited use or useful only to programmers, there are a number that allow Macro5 to perform functions that can't be accessed simply by entering keystrokes into the macro recorder, as we did last time around. We'll look at some of these in more detail over the next few instalments, but in the meantime you may

wish to do some experimenting of your own. You'll find a description of all the supported keywords by launching Macro5 from the Extras bar and selecting 'Tools | Help on Macro5...' This help file also contains some more general tips on macro programming that you'll find useful.

A simple piece of editing

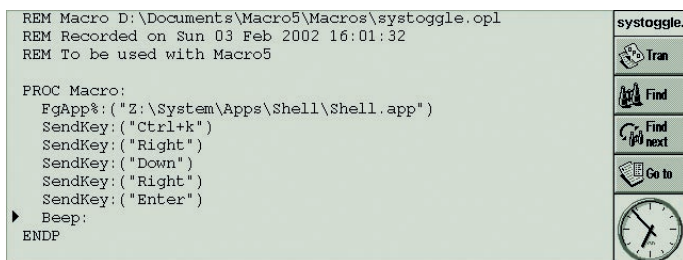
To prove that it's possible to edit a macro that's already been created, let's add a simple step to the 'Systoggle' macro, typing the changes directly into the OPL editor.

- First, locate the 'systoggle.opl' file once again, and open it to launch the program editor.
- Next, we'll insert a simple command at the end of the sequence to make your Psion 'beep' at the end of the macro, to remind you that it's toggled your System

Macro5 for the Revo?

We've had a number of enquiries from readers asking whether a version of Macro5 designed to run on the smaller screen of the Revo is ever likely to appear. The answer to this question is unfortunately "very unlikely". Macro5 development has now effectively ceased, with no updates having been published now for more than two years.

The good news is that in its current guise (version 2.40), Macro5 is a completely stable and 'finished' product with no real requirement for updates or further support. If you're a Revo (or Oregon Osaris) user, however, you'll sadly have to live without Macro5.



**Adding a beep
from within the
OPL editor**

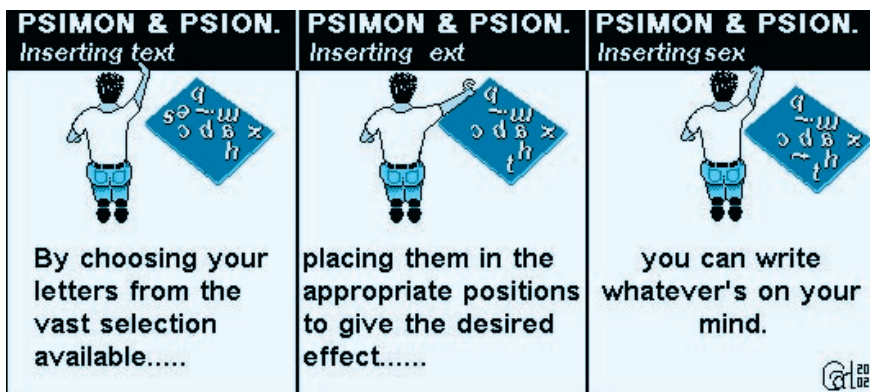
screen settings as requested. To do this, move the cursor to the right hand end of the 'SendKey: ("Enter")' line and press [Enter] to create a new line above the final 'ENDP' statement.

- ▶ Type 'Beep:' (without the quotes) on the new line, not forgetting the colon at the end.
- ▶ Tap the 'Tran' button to the right of the screen to save your new OPL file onto OPO format, and answer 'No' when prompted to 'run program?'

- ▶ Finally, close down the OPL editor.

Now, you should have successfully overwritten your old macro with the new, edited version. Whenever you run the Systoggle macro in future, it will execute the steps as usual, and finally sound a little two-tone 'beep-beep' at the end!

In the next instalment, we'll look at something a little more complex, and go through a few pitfalls to watch out for when working with more sophisticated macros.



Carl Reader, creator of Psimon and Psion as featured in Palmtop, is now available for freelance work. If you're looking for artwork such as splashscreens, game backdrops and icons for your Psion applications, email carl.reader@lineone.net for more details, or go to website.lineone.net/~carl.reader



Getting along with **PDF+**

Steve Clack sings the praises of perhaps the most capable PDF viewer for any handheld computer platform

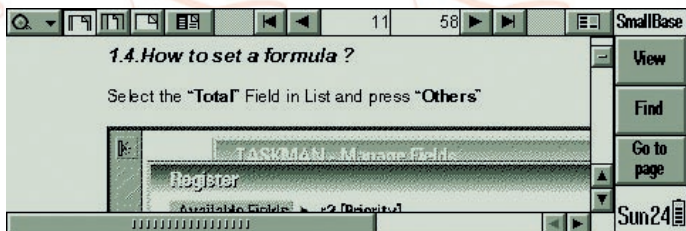
The Adobe Acrobat (commonly known as PDF, or Portable Document Format) standard has become so prevalent in the past few years that it's now relatively uncommon to find computer documentation supplied in anything other than PDF. This cross-platform 'rich' document format has the advantage of preserving all original formatting, colours, typefaces and graphics, complete with the ability to include HTML-style hyperlinks to help with long document navigation.

Viewing PDF files on most handheld computers tends to be a frustrating experience, with most PDF viewers stripping out graphics and often even reducing the text content to plain, unformatted paragraphs. Not so for Psion users. mBrainSoftware's superb PDF+ application preserves all the

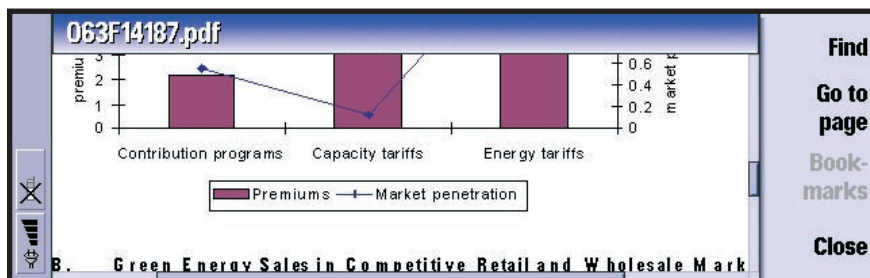
important elements of Adobe Acrobat files, even on the small screen of the Revo. On a Series 7, netBook or Nokia 9210, you can enjoy full colour support as well.

PDF or PDF+?

As well as the €25 'PDF+' application, mBrainSoftware also offers 'PDF', a cut-down freeware version of the product. The main differences between the two variants are that the free version only uses EPOC's built-in bitmap fonts (which makes some files appear as gibberish on screen), and that it doesn't support bookmarks, printing, password protected files, links or automatic navigation of multi-column documents. If you do quite a lot of work with Acrobat files then you'll find the full PDF+ version to be well worth the modest asking price.



A powerful Acrobat viewer for the tiny Psion Revo



Read PDF files on your phone! PDF+ running in full colour on the Nokia 9210

No conversion necessary

Once you've got the software installed, there's thankfully no requirement to re-save your existing Acrobat files into a special format in order to be read them on your EPOC handheld. Just copy across the PDF files and go!

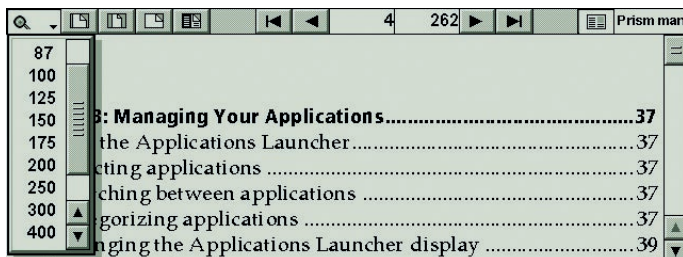
Grow your own

If you want to create your own PDF files then there are a number of options available. Some high-end desktop publishing and graphics applications have the ability to save files directly into Adobe Acrobat format. For programs without this facility, you can create PDFs using Adobe's own Acrobat Distiller program, supplied as part of the full Adobe Acrobat software package, which costs around £200 (see www.adobe.com for details). Acrobat Distiller effectively 'prints'

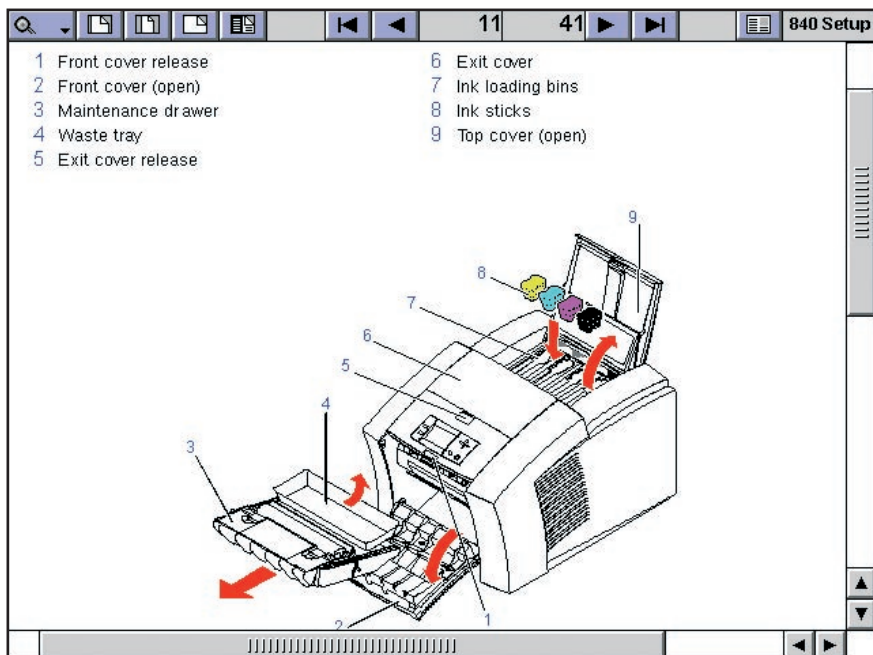
your documents to a PDF file using a special driver, which ensures that *any* type of file that you can print out can also be converted into a PDF.

Compatibility issues

The PDF+ application is currently compatible with Adobe's PDF 1.3 standard, which corresponds to Acrobat 4 format, and also reads files created with earlier versions of Acrobat. This doesn't mean that it can't read files created in Acrobat 5 and beyond, just that it will ignore special features that appear only in later versions. Note that earlier versions of PDF+ did have some compatibility issues, so be sure that you're using the latest version: currently 1.10 for everything except the Nokia 9210, which is currently at version 1.21.



Plenty of zoom levels to choose from



Big screen and full colour—PDF+ on the Series 7/netBook

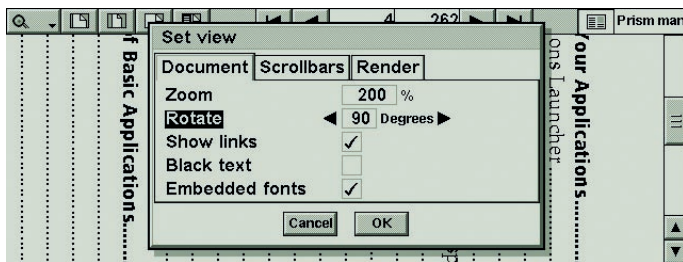
Navigation

Once you've fired up a document in PDF+, you'll find a number of tools to help optimise the way the document is viewed and to navigate efficiently from page to page. You'll usually want to maximise the amount of text that you can read on the small handheld screen, and the 'Maximise view' menu command ensures that the entire screen width is used and that all toolbars are turned off. However, beyond this setting you can often zoom into the document to increase the text size even further, particularly if the document has wide margins. Just use [Ctrl]+[M] to zoom in in increments until you start clipping off the left and right edges of the document, then use [Shift]+[Ctrl]+[M] to zoom back

out by one increment. The sizes of the increments are governed by the figures in the drop down list that appears at the top left of the screen whenever the top toolbar is turned on, i.e. 50, 75, 87, 100, 125, 150, 175, 200, 250, 300 and 400%.

As you zoom to get the absolute maximum text width on screen, you may need to use the left and right arrow keys to 'jog' the page from side to side and get the text centred.

If you do use the 'Maximise view' menu command then note that this overrides all the other toolbar settings you've set. Instead, you may wish to leave the top toolbar on, but remove the side toolbar to maximise the page width, particularly as



Rotating the text in 90 degree increments—left, right, or even upside down!

the 'Next page' button tends to be the only one on the side toolbar that's used with any regularity, and that's just as easily accessed via the top toolbar or keyboard anyway. Also, without the top toolbar you won't be able to see what page you're on.

A minor annoyance with PDF+ is that, unlike Adobe's desktop Acrobat viewers, the up and down arrow keys that you use to scroll through the pages of your document don't automatically move onto the next or previous page when you reach the bottom or top. Instead, you have to use either the buttons on one of the toolbars, or press the letter 'n' for next and 'p' for previous. Unfortunately, there's no alternative keystroke for this at present.

Rotate!

Don't forget that you can rotate the text in 90 degree increments to suit both your own preferences and the layout of the document you're viewing at the time. This option is buried in the 'View | Set view...' dialog, under the 'Document' tab. Note that you can't select, copy or print rotated text.

Exporting

PDF+ has the ability to export text from an Acrobat document into a plain text file (not a Word file). Unfortunately, because

it attempts to maintain the line-by-line formatting of the original document as far as possible, you'll sometimes find that it puts in lots of spaces between letters. This makes it very time consuming to then strip out the spaces in order to make the text readable again, so in such cases you're better off doing the job with Adobe's desktop Acrobat Reader, which has no such limitation. In all cases, PDF+ will add 'Carriage returns' onto the end of each line, though these are much easier to strip out than thousands of spaces.

If the original PDF document was copy-protected by the author, you'll find that the 'Export as text file...' option is greyed out, as is the option to copy to the clipboard.

Although it's not possible to export images directly from PDF+, you can always use the standard Psion screen capture command, [Shift]+[Fn]+[Ctrl]+[S], which will put an EPOC picture file of the current screen into the folder you specify, ready to be brought into Sketch with the 'Merge in...' command and then cropped as necessary.

PDF+ is available for download and purchase from www.mbrainsoftware.com.

Working with Sheet

Struggling with formats and numbers? Steve Litchfield explains what to use and when, in the third part of our tutorial series for relative beginners.

In last issue's practical example, we concluded by displaying a column of numbers in a particular way, or 'format' in Sheet's parlance. As you might expect, this term is associated with all aspects of how the contents of each cell are displayed.

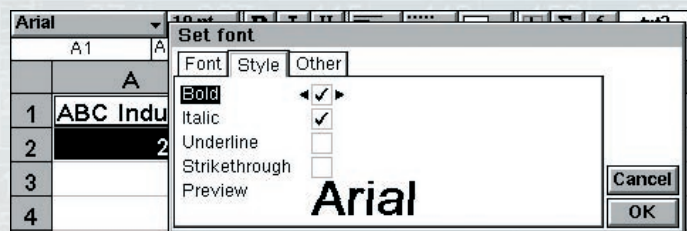
Looking at the 'Format' menu card, you'll find 'Font', 'Number', 'Alignment', 'Border' and 'Shading'. At least four of these are fairly obvious, so we'll cover them quickly before approaching numbers, which are what cause the most confusion. I'd encourage you to open up an empty Sheet document while you work through this tutorial, and to try out each 'Format' command with some simple text and numbers of your own.

Note that quite a few of the commands and options below are also accessible from Sheet's top toolbar.

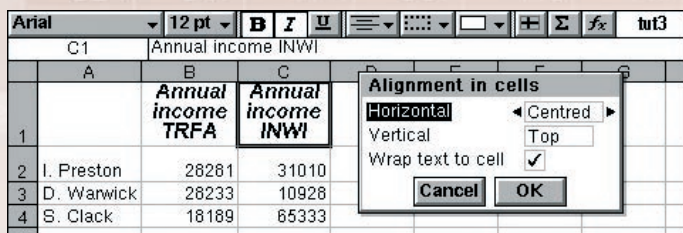
Basic formatting

'Font' gives you absolute control of how the characters in each cell are displayed, subject to the usual constraints that the dialogs will only show you fonts and sizes associated with your current 'Printer setup'. Unless you're going to be outputting directly to a printer, it's best to leave this set to 'Printer via PC', to give yourself the largest choice of available fonts.

'Alignment' is slightly more interesting than it might seem at first, because of the



'Format | Font'
offers plenty
of choice



'Alignment'
used to good
effect—note
the wrapped
text within
BI and CI

option to 'Wrap text to cell'. Checking this box overrides the default behaviour that we saw in the first two parts of this tutorial series, preventing text from overflowing into adjacent cells, and auto-wrapping your text within the current cell. Note that if you have more than a word or two you'll almost certainly need to increase the row height as well. The easiest way to do this is to drag the row divider line, on the left, between each of the row number labels. This is the row equivalent of the dragging of the column dividers that we practised in the first part of the tutorial.

Note that by default the 'Horizontal' alignment is set to 'Standard', which means that Sheet makes up its own mind about how to align the cell's content, usually right aligned for numbers and left aligned for text.

Marking and enhancing

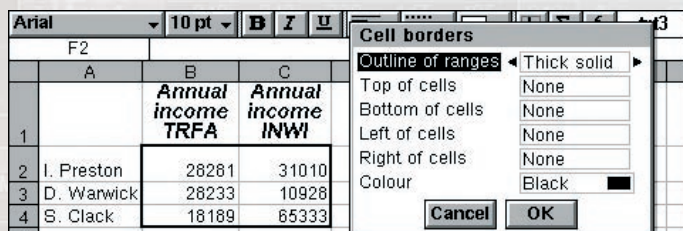
'Border' is slightly less useful than it sounds, especially if you intend to print out your

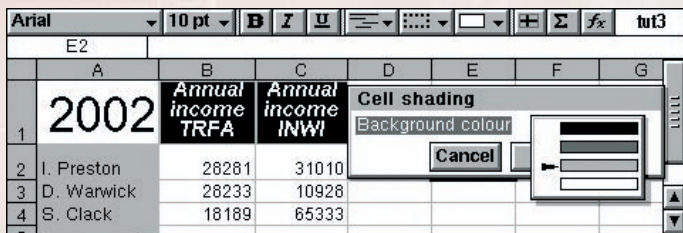
spreadsheet. The principle of arranging neat borders around cell ranges in order to mimic a paper form and/or to make the 'flow' of the spreadsheet clearer is a good one, and Sheet makes the setting up of borders around specific ranges of cells easy. The top line of the 'Cell borders' dialog lets you set a border style for the 'Outline of ranges' directly, with Sheet working out for itself which cells need which edges drawn.

Unfortunately, bugs in Sheet's printing routines mean that cell borders don't always print out perfectly. You *might* be lucky, but most old hands rely instead on the next 'Format' command...

'Shading' works surprisingly well, even in monochrome, to mark off ranges of cells which need visually grouping together. It's trivial to apply (as whole blocks can be completely shaded in a single operation), prints well and makes even simple spreadsheets look more professional.

The 'Outline of ranges' dialog line makes borders a doddle





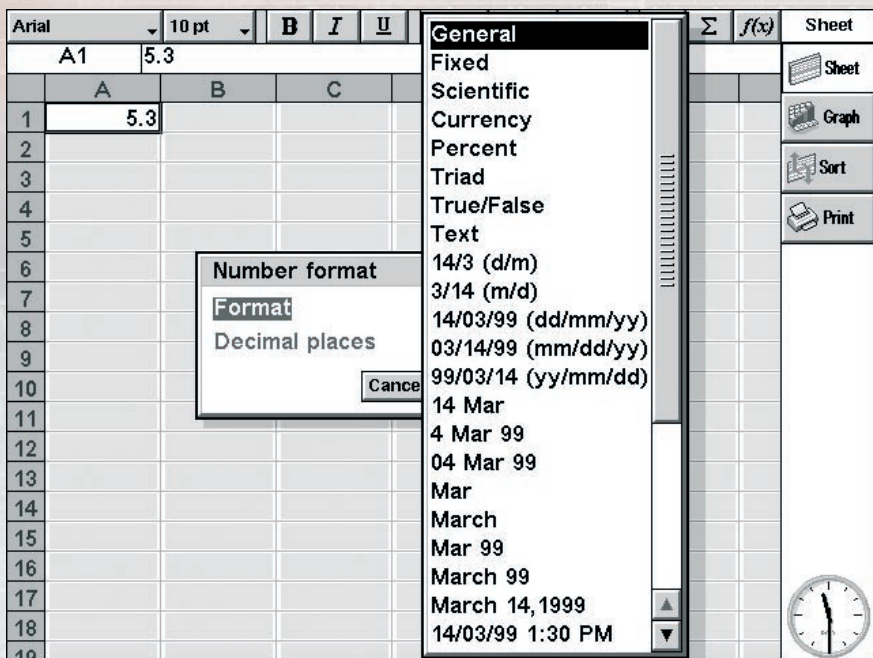
'Shading' adds a professional touch

Numbers, numbers everywhere

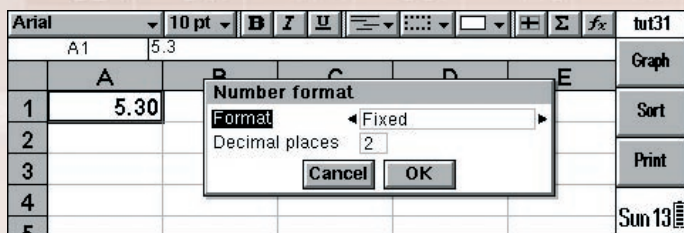
And so to 'Number', for which there are a huge number of possible formats. Press [Tab] on the first line of the 'Number format' dialog and you'll see what I mean. For the same cell contents, each number format choice presents a different form or even meaning.

To explore Sheet's number formatting, start by typing a number (e.g. '5.3') into an empty cell and pressing [Enter]. Sheet defaults all numbers to the 'General' format, where what you type in is usually what you see entered, no matter how few or many digits or decimal places you input.

Change the number format to 'Fixed' though, and you'll see that there's an

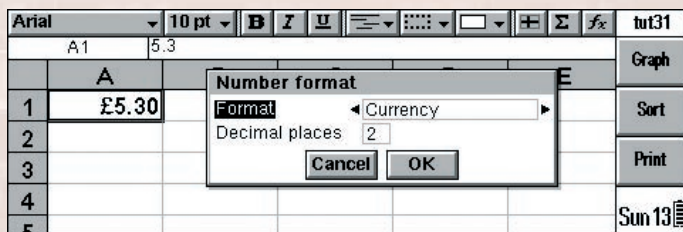


The bewildering array of possible number formats



The most useful number format of all. 'Fixed' keeps your numbers in check!

Sheet brings in the currency symbol from your Control panel



automatic conversion to a set number of decimal places. This is most useful when you're trying to compare a long column of numbers by eye—having the decimal point in the same place for every row means a lot less jumping about for your eyeballs!

If the 'Scientific' format (e.g. 5.30E+00) is totally foreign to you, just skip it. For engineers and scientists, it's the standard notation for representing what could be extraordinarily large or small numbers.

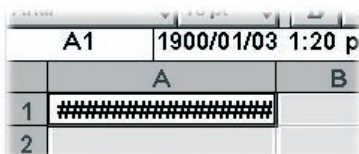
For example, 5.30E-09m would represent 5.3 nanometres.

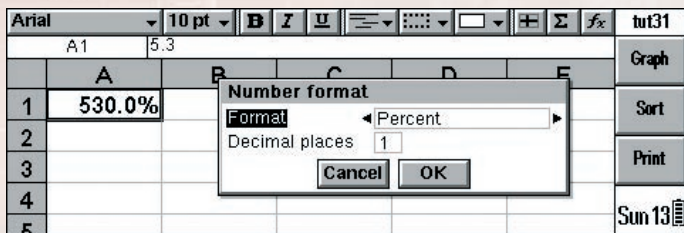
Sheet sleight of hand

Far more useful for the rest of us is the next number format choice, 'Currency', something that you're bound to use at some point in one of your spreadsheets. Your cell contents ('5.3') are now shown as '£5.30', with Sheet going off to look up your

Hash alert

When building a new spreadsheet which makes heavy use of numbers and formulae, you'll find rows of 'hash' (#) signs a common occurrence. They're not a signal to panic—the hash signs simply denote that the cell's contents can't be properly displayed because there isn't room. Unless you decide to take this opportunity to change the cell's formatting to something more compact, you'll find the quickest fix is simply to widen the cell by dragging on the column divider, as you learnt to do in the first part of this tutorial.





Same meaning, different number. Sheet knows all about percentages

chosen currency symbol or abbreviation in ‘Control panel | International | Currency’.

It’s very important to note that the currency symbol itself is not part of the cell’s contents—it’s applied as a formatting option by Sheet, according to your instruction that the number represents a sum of money. The same principle applies to our next option...

‘Percent’ not only sees a formatting character (%) added to the cell’s apparent contents, it also sees an apparent re-evaluation of the number itself. In our example, the cell now displays ‘530.00%’, but don’t worry, a moment’s thought will convince you that this is still 5.3 in value. After all, 100% would be equivalent to ‘1’. Sheet is simply using its intelligence to present your number in keeping with the format chosen.

Triads and text

‘Triad’ is another number format that’s useful when browsing through a long column of numbers. It splits up each group of three digits before the decimal place with your chosen thousands separator (see ‘Control panel | International | Number’).

When choosing an appropriate number format, you can probably skip both ‘True/False’ and ‘Text’. The former can occasionally be useful when constructing advanced spreadsheets that use logic to determine which rows and columns to display or work

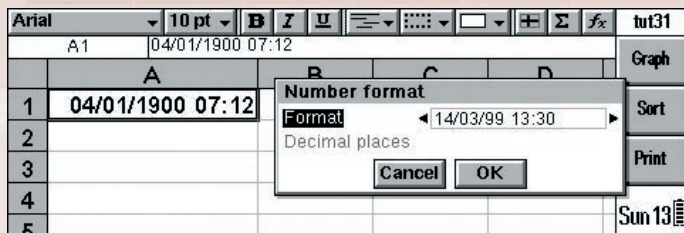
on. Essentially, zero is FALSE and everything else is considered TRUE.

The ‘Text’ format is rather redundant in the current version of Sheet, which is clever enough to still consider the number and its value, even if you tell it to treat your typed number characters as plain alphanumeric text. And if you type in something with genuine text (i.e. letters), Sheet knows not to apply the number format that has been set up for that cell. Don’t worry too much about all this, Sheet’s usually cleverer than you might give it credit for.

How do you like your time?

The rest of the number format options are taken up by over 20 variations on date and time. At first glance, as with currency and percentage above, the formatting slashes, colons and spaces seem *not* to be part of the cell’s contents—Sheet appears to be interpreting the number within the cell according to a simple formula of its own. So typing in 5.3 and then requesting a suitable number format (the example given in the dialog choice is ‘14/03/99 13:30’) yields the very old and very odd date and time of ‘04/01/1900 07:12’.

The number ‘1’, incidentally, corresponds to midnight at the start of 31st December 1899, with date and time working up from there, day-by-day, until we get to modern



'5.3' expressed as a date and time using Sheet's unique system

A simple date calculation – more on this in the next tutorial

	A	B	C	
1	Time 1	13/01/2002 19:12		Sort
2	Time 2	31/08/1999 06:00		Print
3	Days difference=	866.55		Sun 13
4				
5				

times, whose date and time codes work out to be almost 37,000. The advantage of using such a system, where every point in time has a specific (and easy to calculate) number associated with it, is that date and time calculations are easy to perform, with cells being manipulated and calculated entirely as normal. In fact, in the next part to this series, we're going to be looking at constructing a simple time logbook.

characters *do* become part of the cell's contents, as you can see by looking on the input line at the top of the screen. You can edit the date/time here, as long as you leave its basic form alone, and any calculations based on the cell's contents will still work. Add or subtract a character that changes the form though, and the cell is treated as merely containing text, which of course it now *does*.

Change with care

There's a subtlety here which needs to be noted. Unlike with currency and percentage, the formatting and extra

When used with a little care, you'll find that being able to do calculations based on date and time is surprisingly useful. Which is why we'll return to this specific subject in the next tutorial.

8 great prizes to be won!!

FIVE PalmTec cases and THREE 4-way multi-function stylus pens worth almost £300 in total!



You choose your prize: any PalmTec case (including Pod hard cases for the Series 5/5mx in a range of metallic painted colours), Shell hard cases for the Revo in a range of metallic painted colours, Semi Rigid Cases for the Series 7/netBook, and funky neoprene cases in any one of three two-tone colours (available for any model), or multi-function 4-way pointers (suitable for all Psion models). All winners will also receive a free pack of PalmTec's colourful translucent plastic pointers for the Series 5/7 or the Revo.

All entries must be submitted by 31st March 2002. The decision of Palmtop Publications and PalmTec is final. Last issue's correct answers were: 1. Microsoft PowerPoint, 2. netpad, 3. Calligrapher.

Just answer the three questions below and submit them on the special page at PalmTec's web site on www.palmttec.com/palmttop.htm, where you will also be required to state your prize preference.

1. Which new Nokia communicator has a built-in camera?
2. Which freeware program helps to manage your OPX files?
3. Which program allows you to view Adobe Acrobat files on the Nokia 9210?

Software



In the third of the series, Steve Litchfield looks at some personal must-have software add-ons

Just like Pete Sipple in issue 35, I've also found myself moving from a Series 5mx to the smaller, lighter and rechargeable Revo Plus. At the same time, of course, I've had to say goodbye to a few old friends, including TomeRaider, whose data files tended to fill whatever storage space I had available, clever compression or not. One TomeRaider file I had lying around on CompactFlash in my Series 5mx (a home-converted encyclopaedia) was around 36MB!

In order to move from a 5mx to a Revo Plus, a serious pruning down was in order so that I could squeeze everything into the 16MB of available memory and at the same time make my EPOC working environment leaner and meaner. By a happy coincidence, it's now my turn to present some

personal 'software gems'—applications (perhaps lesser known) that I just *couldn't* do without.

Conferencing in my palm

I've mentioned CIX conferencing in the pages of Palmtop before, but it deserves another plug here. Imagine all your favourite Internet newsgroups, collected together, and with all adverts, spam and clutter removed. Then imagine that everyone is friendly, helpful and expert in a number of the fields you're interested in. That's CIX conferencing. It's not free (around £7 per month minimum) but most subscribers find that it pays for itself in sheer usefulness. You can ask advice, request help or simply start a discussion, collecting the replies of others several times a day using **CixEd** (if you're doing everything on a Psion).

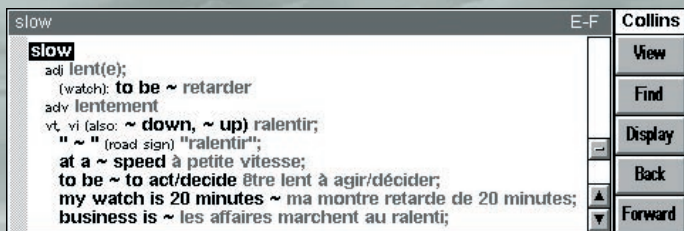
Conference: cd_writing/video Date: Sat Jan 5 16:29 02 155 unread m
Message #496 from bparker (comment to #495) **Only in topic**

Look at Sound Forge Vegas Video 3. There is a trial download and it has had good reviews on the NGs.

Barry.



Pooling your knowledge with thousands of others on CIX



*The well
thought out
and
comprehensive
Collins
language
dictionary*

CixEd's management of message 'threads' is fairly rudimentary, but I know at least one regular Palmtop contributor who is joined to dozens of conferences and whose sole access to CIX is via CixEd—an impressive tribute to the workability of the system.

J'ai mal aux dents

Although not an inveterate traveller, I feel lost without a language reference or two to help out when things go wrong. There are several foreign language references on the market, but I've grown up with PalmTop Software's **Collins English-French**, which strikes a good balance between storage space, comprehensiveness and usability. Words are quick-matched as you type (in either language direction) and, in addition to simple translations, there are example phrases and colloquial terms.

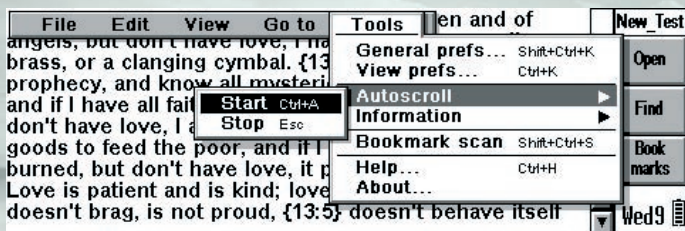
Add in fast operation, the ability to go both forwards and backwards between trails of words that have been looked up, several search modes and regular and irregular

verb tables—then stop to marvel that the whole thing only takes up only two megabytes. There are several language variants available, though I should warn that you'll need at least a passing familiarity with the target language in order to get the most out of the Collins applications.

For languages other than French, I know little more than 'Hello', which makes my next choice indispensable: **Berlitz PhraseBook**. This was also originally programmed by PalmTop Software but subsequently rebranded by Psion themselves. You might think that Berlitz PhraseBook is an odd choice as it's not officially available anymore and was never made fully Revo-compatible. But I installed it regardless, and with a few minor display glitches I find the program just as useful as it ever was. When the on-screen icons aren't immediately obvious because of the smaller screen, the 'Change subject' command ([Ctrl]+[u]) comes in useful, presenting the full list of phrase categories. A great 'Find' command

*Phrases for
every occasion
in 13 different
languages*





Configuring EBook

takes me instantly to all phrases containing the chosen word.

For each category, I can choose from a variety of common phrases and variations, copying the ones I think I'm about to need into a 'script' that can be displayed in its entirety for delivery in my chosen situation and language.

Text as far as the eye can see

Vital for both reference and pleasure, compressed electronic texts (etexts) feature heavily on my Psion, usually in Palm 'PRC' format these days. Chief among these are the New Testament, which compresses down to about 500K, various home-converted technical manuals and some fiction grabbed off the Internet. **EBook** isn't the most visually appealing program in the world, but it's fabulously efficient: searching the entire New Testament for a text string takes a mere three seconds. There's also just about every other feature you've ever seen in a document reader, from book-

marks to autoscroll, from an impressive seven zoom levels to a choice of horizontal or vertical orientations.

Trivial pursuits

One of my pet projects over the last five years has been the building up of **Trivopaedia** (or simply 'Trivia', as it used to be called), the ultimate mini-reference of useful facts and figures with a decidedly trivial bent. It runs under EPOC as an illustrated database, with entries for such pub quiz winners as Beer measures, Birthstones, Books of the Apocrypha, Boolean functions, Boxing weights and Braille, to name just a handful of the entries starting with 'B'. There are hundreds of Trivopaedia entries, compiled by myself and a multitude of others, many with illustrations. Revo owners should make a point to install Sketch in order to see the pictures.

One of many useful entries in Trivopaedia



Total files: 512	Directories total: 10843009	
C:\System\Apps\BigColF\	2495902	Dirs
C:\System\Apps\Opera\	1684592	About
C:\	1576439	Help
C:\System\Apps\Street\	630868	Save list
C:\System\Apps\Street\Reading\	533815	Thu 17
C:\System\Opx\	463652	
C:\System\Apps\Trivia\	437449	
C:\System\Apps\RMRFTP\	394367	
C:\System\Apps\phrase\	310320	

*Establishing
where all my
memory has
gone with
JB5Utils*

Useful utilities

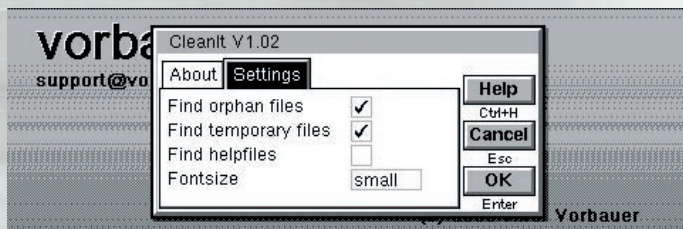
No operating system should be without a few handy utilities to help out when things go horribly wrong. Essential Disk Utilities (reviewed in issue 18) saved the day many times when I had a CF-equipped Series 5mx, but I doubt it would be worth loading onto a memory-only Revo Plus.

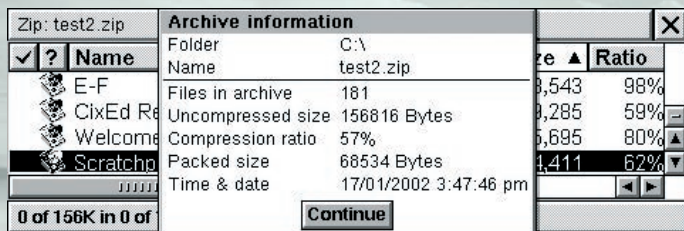
JB5Utils, from the Psion programming legend that is John Boyce, is my first 'jack of all trades' utility, whose main function is to find ways of saving disk (memory) space. An opening screen lets me choose between five separate functions, each really an EPOC application in its own right. Particularly of note are 'Large files', which only lists those over a limit that you set, and 'Find files', which offers the chance to search within all files in a chosen folder or disk for the text string of my choice. 'Dir space used' shows the space taken up by files in each folder on my Psion disk, with the results sorted in folder size order. This is invaluable when looking for likely candidate folders to delete in the quest for more free memory.

Although JB5Utils takes care of large unwanted files, **CleanIt** is needed to spring clean at the bottom end. In most cases, each application I've tried and removed has left small configuration and data files lying around in System folders. When taken together and deleted using CleanIt, it's possible to make significant savings. In addition, EPOC's speed is often related to the number of files on the computer—the fewer unnecessary files, the better. CleanIt presents a list box with all relevant culprits and it's up to me to select the ones I agree with.

There are now several 'archiving' utilities available, usually using the standard 'ZIP' format, which can work wonderfully well for keeping specific file sets together while at the same time saving yet more valuable storage space. My own favourite is RMRZip. It was the first such program available (by quite some way) and as a result it looks and feels the most polished and mature. Although the Revo's small screen limits the available space for the main contents

*Setting up
CleanIt to scan
my System
folder*





RMRZip has many, many uses

display, every dialog and screen element is thoughtfully designed and there are no unpleasant surprises.

Image all-rounder

Useful in every aspect of my handheld life, as writer, programmer and general user, **MBMView** consistently manages to hang around on my Psion in the face of new graphics utilities on all sides. As a writer, MBMView lets me check the screenshots I've just grabbed, weeding out the less essential ones. As a programmer, it lets me create multi-bitmap files from (potentially) dozens of smaller images and snippets. And as a Psion user, it lets me open up industry standard BMP, JPG and GIF images, for viewing on screen or for converting into other formats and using elsewhere.

Rule of thumb

How many times have you misplaced your ruler and needed to measure something? **VRule** is more than just a novelty utility,

it's a workable ruler, along the top or side of the palmtop screen. It can be set to pop up on top of the current application as and when you need it, in imperial or metric units, and there's even a special mode for programmers whereby the graduations are in screen pixels. This last is very useful when working through the placement of graphical elements in a work in progress.

Hard left

There are a huge number of EPOC games, a few even written by myself and which I play in odd moments. Modesty permits me mentioning Fairway, etc. in any detail and, in any case, they've been mentioned in Palmtop many times over the years.

I'm a big fan of driving games, which is why I'm going to plump for mentioning another PalmTop Software product, **V-Rally**, which is about all there is in this genre for EPOC. It's a simplistic conversion of an equally simplistic coin-op game, but at least it's fast

Popping up a ruler!





Rallying in glorious monochrome

and smoothly animated, by virtue of being written in C++.

As you might guess from the screenshot, the aim is to use either keyboard or stylus (preferred) to guide the rally car of my choice around other cars and obstacles. A nice touch is the use of sound to provide

navigator instructions, such as 'Easy right' and 'Hard left'. As with most other EPOC games, the biggest disappointment is the restriction to monochrome—there simply is no comparison with the gloriously colourful competition running on devices such as the Palm IIIc, Visor Prism and Pocket PC handhelds.

Availability

CixEd - free, see the 'cixed' conference on CIX, from www.cix.co.uk/~mfleeming/cixed.htm—email gids@cx.co.uk for help and guidance on getting set up).

Collins English-French Dictionary - £30, from www.tomtom.com

Berlitz PhraseBook - no longer available new, try second-hand or email me at: slitchfield@ukonline.co.uk for help tracking this down.

Ebook - £10, from www.geocities.com/ebookepoc

Trivopaedia - free, from 3lib.ukonline.co.uk

JB5Utils - free, from www.cix.co.uk/~jbsoft

CleanIt - free, from www.vorbauer.com

RMRZip - £15, from www.rmrsoft.com

MBMView - \$25, from ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/platodva/psion.htm

VRule - free for personal use, from www.fatcatz.tm

V-Rally - £20, from www.tomtom.com

On the NET

Our regular
look at what's
happening
online, and
where to point
your browser



by Pete Sipple

Moving forward into 2002, we see some interesting changes to the EPOC online world. With last year's news that Psion has stepped back from the PDA market, a lot's happened online—there's also a lot *not* happening too. After a flurry of activity regarding Psion's announcement, chat in the *comp.sys.pSION.misc* group has reduced to a steady trickle. Updates to some of the top sites have slowed too, which on first impression shows a decrease of interest in all things Psion. Others have taken advantage of the climate change, and taken action—many of the big boys have increased the number of updates, realising that it's a time of change and wanting to stay ahead of the rest.

OK, so we can't expect a Series 9 from Psion this year, but that doesn't mean the user base out there is any less hungry for news, software, features and chat. There's a huge base of machines out there, and with low prices on new hardware and plenty of second-hand products up for grabs, it all adds up to a whole lot of potential new traffic.

In this issue, we'll take a look at some of the new or reborn sites to come online and sites for the new kid on the block.

RIP Psion?

Rather than trawl the newsgroups for some informed comment on Psion's decision, it's best I direct you to our friends at Foxpop. This site has expanded from pure Psion content to include information on Windows CE, Palm, Nokia and mobile computing in general, as well as the EPOC world. It remains a great source for informed comment, and their 'Psion RIP' section has some detailed observations on Psion, milestones, comment from an official Psion representative on last year's decision, plus the company's plans for the future. www.foxpop.ndirect.co.uk/EPOCcover.htm.

Pscience facts



It's been a while since I've stopped by this site, and it's good to see that it has gone from strength to strength. There are some great articles, including some controversial comments and images in 'Martin's Musings'. There's also an impressive 137 links to other Psion/EPOC sites (although no link to our On The Net page—hint hint!) Personal favourite for me has to be the PGG (Project Galactic Guide) page. This is where you'll find the software needed to access the "electronic book meant to guide and misguide its readers in matters of life, death and finding a parking spot anywhere in the Universe". Douglas Adams' dream lives on. www.pscience5.net.

Web site snippets

- ▶ **Namechange** - EpocCity has moved, and is now known as SymbCity. Still a great site, with an active EPOC forum, www.symbcity.com/forum.
- ▶ **Get talking** - PDABuzz has a lot to talk about, with 200,000 posts from 24,000 members. This site is where you need to go if you want to talk about PDAs, with sections for all the main platforms and an active EPOC area. Site navigation's easy, if a little slow at times, but it's certainly busy, and free from some of the spam found in the main newsgroups. Fly over to www2.pdabuzz.com/Forums/index.php.
- ▶ **Fun time** - a new site promising to be "updated soon", is EPOC Gamer, dedicated to the games world, with reviews and links to some top games. Hopefully, we'll see more content soon, making this a great resource for those of us tired of databases and to-do lists! www.epocgamer.com.
- ▶ **Psionstar** - a name I'd not come across before, and a promising one for a new site. Don't rush though, as despite the name, it lets you wade through details of Palm, Handspring and Compaq reviews and, if you look hard enough, find half a page on Psions. www.psion.aguk.co.uk.
- ▶ **Tease!** - it's been "coming soon" for months. Will someone give them a nudge from us? www.epocplace.com.

Nokia 9210 Newbies

The first colour ER6 device is out, and it seems that sales are good. If you've got a 9210 and are looking to make the most of it, you'll be glad to hear that sites are springing up at a rate of knots:

- ▶ **AllaboutER6** - from the makers of EPOCHelp (www.epochelp.com), this impressive site contains a huge amount of information on the 9210 and other ER6 machines. There's a lively discussion forum and, best of all, a list of around 180 software apps, all neatly categorised. The Support area also has some useful FAQ pages. Appealing, informative and up-to-date. www.allabout6.com.
- ▶ **MyCommunicator** - with coverage of the 9210, 9110 and the forthcoming 7650 from Nokia, this site offers discussion, technical data and an interactive demo. Best of all is their sizeable software list. www.my-communicator.com.
- ▶ **Nokia's 9210 site** - also worth bookmarking is Nokia's own site at www.nokia.com/phones/9210. If nothing else, it's worth taking a look in the 'Downloads' section of their product support page to get the latest software for your communicator and PC.

Have your say!

Next time you're online, please take a couple of minutes to fill out our quick On The Net questionnaire. Tell us which EPOC sites you visit most frequently and have your say on what you want to see next time around. There's also our updated list of top sites.

www.petesipple.co.uk/onthenet.htm

On The Net	
Palmtop's On The Net Questionnaire	
What is your favourite site for EPOC Software?	
What is your favourite site for EPOC chat?	
What is your favourite general Psion / EPOC site?	
Which is your main EPOC device?	
Anything you'd like to see in On The Net?	
What would you like to see featured in On The Net?	
What type of mobile phone do you have?	
Do you access the 'net from your EPOC device?	☐
Do you subscribe to Palmtop?	☐
What's your favourite Palmtop feature?	

Hints & Tips

**Every item published in this section wins the author
TWO free issues added to their subscription!**

When is a cradle not a cradle?

The answer is: "When it fits very badly". When I upgraded from a Revo to a Revo Plus, I simply started using the existing docking cradle as the new one looked identical. After a month or so of erratic connections, I finally got around to installing the cradle that came with the newer palmtop. Instant success and the docking fit is once again quick and easy.

I can only surmise that there has been a subtle and undocumented change to the dimensions of the cradle and plug/socket assembly—worth noting for anyone else owning both Revo variants.

David Eaton, Rugby

Even faster news

Issue 34 of Palmtop showcased using the various Psion palmtops on the web, including mention of the well-respected BBC News site. In addition to the low-bandwidth version mentioned, there is also a specific site for EPOC (and other PDA) users. It can be found at: [news.bbc.co.uk/](http://news.bbc.co.uk/low/english/pda)

[low/english/pda](http://news.bbc.co.uk/low/english/pda). It's text-only and very fast to access while on the move. Incidentally, finding out about this PDA option is a real challenge. If you search the BBC News site for "PDA" you can find the relevant information in the Help section at news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/static/help/pda.stm.

Lord Wadehouse, Marlow, Buckinghamshire

Silent movies

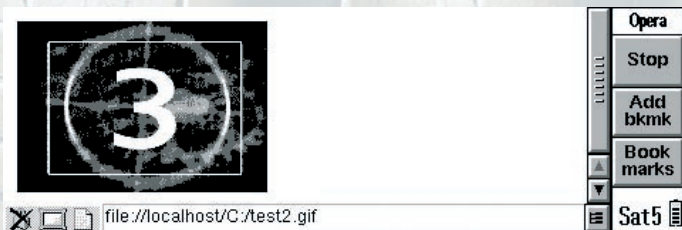
Perhaps not the most efficient solution ever, but I've discovered that I can view standard AVI movie files on my Psion Revo Plus using just the Opera web browser. Provided that the movie's resolution and frame rate are low enough, both to save on file size and processor overload on the Psion, the technique can work acceptably for short promotional video clips or favourite home movie moments.

In your video editing software (e.g. VideoWave or Premiere), start by reducing your clip in length (under 10 seconds, preferably), resolution (176x120 works well) and frame rate (five frames per second, or

BBC NEWS
[Front](#) | [World](#) | [UK](#) | [Sport](#) | [Sci/Tech](#) | [Business](#) | [Health](#) | [Education](#) | [Ents](#)
Sat 5 January 2002, 22:28 GMT
Taleban envoy detained by US
The former Taleban ambassador to Pakistan Mullah Zaeef is detained by the US military after his denotation to Afghanistan.
  <http://news.bbc.co.uk/low/english/pda/>



**Faster news
and lower
GSM mobile
bills**



*Watching my
test movie clip
in Opera*

lower). You can also remove the soundtrack, if there is one. Save the result as a standard AVI-format movie file and then use any web graphics tool (e.g. Ulead's GIF Animator) to convert this into an optimised, animated GIF. This can then be copied over to a Psion disk and opened up in Opera.

It's all rather slow, as I alluded earlier. My test 10 second clip, at five frames per second, ended up as a 500K GIF file that played in Opera at around three frames per second. A lot of trouble for a slightly disappointing result, but still a useful technique for occasional use.

Anthony Partridge, London

Battery drain warning

Be careful not to leave your Revo Plus unplugged for too long when not using it. I went away for a week's holiday recently and came back to find my Revo Plus apparently dead. As an old Psion hand, I coolly plugged in the mains adaptor and tried again. The result was a boot up from 'factory' condition—it turns out that the battery drain caused by maintaining the contents of its 16MB of memory, even when turned off, is not to be underestimated.

If you *do* have to leave your Revo Plus unplugged for a long period, at least make sure you do a full backup first, should you

later need to restore everything onto a virgin palmtop.

Stuart Prince, Darlington

Emulator revisited

Following on from the tip in issue 34, here's a shorter and safer way for programmers to check whether or not an OPL program is running on the Emulator.

Add this line to the beginning of your program:

```
INCLUDE "System.oxh"
```

Then, where required, just use the following construct:

```
IF MachineName$: = "WINS Pc"
REM Running on the Emulator

    {your code here}

ELSE      REM Running on EPOC
hardware

    {your code here}

ENDIF
```

The same method can also be used to distinguish between different EPOC computers, although you should remember that some (early) Series 5mx units return 'SERIE5mx' instead of 'SERIES5mx'.

Trygve Henriksen, Molde, NORWAY

Q&A

Get your Psion and
EPOC-related questions
answered by our
editorial panel...

A difference of dates

Q In Sheet, I want to input two dates into two cells, and in a third cell be able to see the number of days between the two dates. In Excel, I use the function `'=datedif(A1;A2;"YD")'`, but this doesn't seem to work in Sheet.

Kjell Norden, Haninge, SWEDEN

A Working in Sheet on the Psion, simply set up the two original cells as one of the 'date' formats (see 'Format | Number' for the full list of choices). Then the third cell can simply be `'=A2-A1'`, or whatever. Sheet knows that the cells contain dates and therefore 'does the right thing'.

Dialling up

Q How do I connect to the Internet without going into Email and downloading my mailbox?

Rachel Peters, Southampton

A By 'connecting to the Internet' in the context of your question, we assume that you mean 'accessing a web site'. You simply need to install another application (a web browser) onto your palmtop. Psion provide their own 'Web', usually on CD in the box, but Opera (last reviewed

in issue 35) is another popular choice (www.opera.com). When you start up the browser and type in a web address, EPOC will offer to dial up using your modem, with no need to go into Email at all.

Advanced users might like to note that John McAleely's utility 'The Dialer' (www.mcaleely.com) lets you connect up independently from any application, in the same manner as Dial Up Networking on a Windows PC. Note though that if you are dialling with no Internet applications running, you need to make sure in 'Control Panel | Internet' that you have a value entered on the dialog line 'On exit, stay online for...', otherwise the connection will be dropped again immediately.

Fixed or mobile?

Q When reporting problems going online via a GSM mobile phone, I often see people being advised to change 'Modem type' (in 'Control panel | Modems') to 'Fixed Line'. What exactly does changing this setting (from 'Mobile' to 'Fixed Line') do?

Paul Knight, Liverpool

A When this is set to 'Mobile', EPOC goes off to interrogate the mobile phone with special



commands, ostensibly to improve functionality and performance. Unfortunately, if the phone concerned doesn't play by the rules and decides to return an error message, the dialling process eventually stops with a 'timed out' message.

Changing the setting to 'Fixed Line' usually overcomes this problem, simply by omitting the extra mobile-specific commands, although SMS messaging and other functionality can be adversely affected.

Rocky upgrade

Q

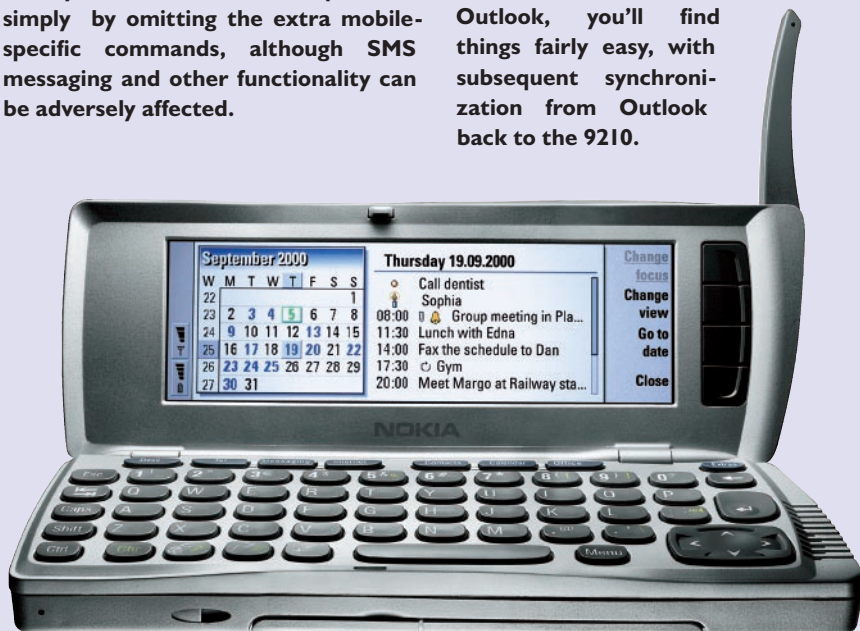
I read with interest your recent reviews and features on the Nokia 9210. With the presumably inevitable ultimate demise of the Revo, one obvious question is whether I will be able to download the contents of my Revo to a 9210 via the software provided?

Richard Biffa, Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire

A

It all depends on what types of data and/or applications are most precious on your Revo. Nokia hasn't provided an upgrade 'Wizard' for existing EPOC owners, centring their efforts on getting Nokia 9110 owners up to speed first.

If you already synchronize most of your PIM data successfully with a desktop system such as Microsoft Outlook, you'll find things fairly easy, with subsequent synchronization from Outlook back to the 9210.



If you don't use desktop synchronization with your Revo then you may have to work a little harder. Contact records can be exported from your Revo as a single VCF file and then imported into a desktop PIM, or beamed via infrared directly into the 9210's Contacts, one at a time. Word and Sheet files are best handled by converting into Microsoft Word and Excel equivalents on the desktop and then converting again back onto the Nokia. Agenda information is more problematic, and you'll probably find it easiest simply to re-enter important birthdays and upcoming events manually. Data files should be exported into delimited text form on the Revo and then re-imported into a third party database application running on the 9210.

Applications shouldn't be much of a problem. Not because you can take them with you (you can't, EPOC Release 6 uses Unicode characters and is completely incompatible), but because many of the more significant third party programs have already been ported to the Nokia 9210. See Software Shorts on page 12 for more on this. Some software upgrades may be free, though some will be chargeable.

Real problems

Q When using RealPlayer Mobile to replay downloaded files on my Nokia 9210, I get a screen that says 'Failed to open audio device'. What's going wrong?

Dr A Iswami, Nairobi, KENYA



A A companion program, Advanced Audio Support, is required for RealPlayer Mobile to work properly. This is provided in the original 'realplayer.sis' installation file, but it can be removed separately from RealPlayer Mobile itself, perhaps by accident? If it is missing, reinstall RealPlayer Mobile from scratch and all should be well.

Bluetooth?



Q Is it possible to use Bluetooth wireless connectivity products yet with a Psion palmtop? I keep hearing so much about it.

Wayne Brown, Guildford, Surrey



A Alas, no. Bear in mind that even when new technologies do finally make it to market, they tend to work only on cutting edge hardware. One exception to this might be the Psion Teklogix netBook, which can handle the hardware requirements of wireless networking cards and which can have its operating system upgraded as necessary.

No access



Q I have recently put Microsoft Access onto my PC, thinking "good, I can now convert database files between PC and Psion". However, when the two are connected via PsiWin and I double-click on a Psion file to convert it into Access format, I get the message 'There was a problem converting the file, you are denied access'. Can you tell me what the problem is?

John McGoldrick, Morley, Leeds



**Exporting
a database
manually,
in Data**

A The problem is that the word ‘database’ covers a multitude of possibilities. At its simplest, a database is just a collection of plain text entries, each perhaps split into different ‘fields’. Converting such a database in either direction is usually foolproof, either using PsiWin’s routines or using import and export functions in Access and in Data as appropriate.

Unfortunately, real-world databases tend to be more complicated, with operating system-specific objects and enhancements, a single one of which is enough to stop automatic conversion. The situation is complicated by the fact that Access itself is complicated and definitely not a flat-file database in the manner of Data, so there’s no easy one-to-one correspondence.

If you’ve used ‘rich’ features in Data, you can still use ‘Export as text file’ for performing one-off transport over into Access. You’ll simply lose anything that’s not plain text.

Mystery programs

Q Space is starting to get tight on my Revo, so I’ve been having a clear out in ‘Control panel | Add/remove’. Apart from the genuine programs

listed which I want to keep, I am left with several ‘extras’, listed below. Which, if any, can I safely get rid of?

Alarm OPX Symbian Ltd 5.10

Contact OPX Symbian Ltd 1.00

FILib - Flossy support OPM 2.44

Macro5 library 2.40

NEUON - nlistBox OPX 1.02

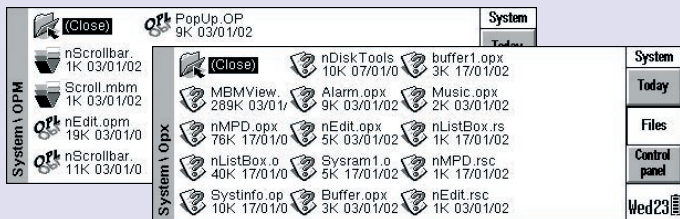
SysramI OPX Symbian Ltd 5.20

Systinfo OPX Symbian Ltd 5.10

Trevor Blackmur, London

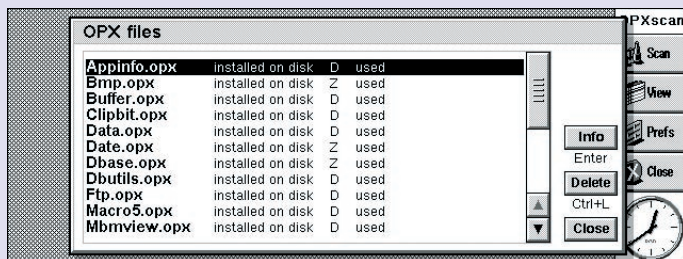
A If in any doubt, we’d suggest that you keep them all! As regular Palmtop readers will know, OPX (and OPM) files are small extensions to the OPL programming language that many shareware and freeware programs use. Most of the above are quite common and will very probably still be needed by an application you have installed. In addition, they’re all relatively small files and deleting them wouldn’t save you much disk space anyway.

The reason why OPX and OPM files (and similar) are installed and listed separately is precisely *because* they’re likely to be needed by several different programs—it’d be painful to remove program ‘A’ and all its associated



Typical OPM and OPX folders—only MBMView.opx is of a size worth worrying about

The freeware OPXscan is an excellent tool that can help to manage your OPX files



files only to find that program 'B' no longer ran.

If you really insist on housekeeping your OPX files from time to time, there's an excellent freeware utility called OPXscan (www.pSIONwelt.com/ralphsprenger). It will tell you exactly which OPX files you have installed, which disk they're on, and whether they're currently in use, which gives you a better idea of whether it's safe to remove them.

appearance in most programs, in fact it's left entirely to the programmer of each application. In Word's case, it seems that its programmers didn't spend much time on the command—the only type of action that can be undone is deletion. It's now too late to complain to Psion, so you'll have to live with it, perhaps making backup copies of your document under different names, in case of accidents.

The undoing of undo

Q The Undo command ([Ctrl]+[z]) doesn't seem to work from within Word. Is this normal or am I missing something?

Trevor Blackmur, London

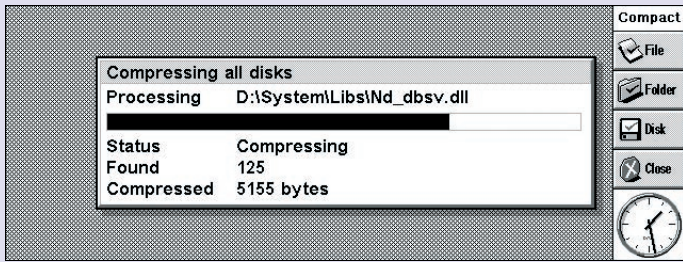
A Although you might think 'Undo' was something the operating system itself handled, judging from the command's

Keep it tidy!

Q When I cleared out some of my Agenda entries recently, the procedure seemed to *reduce* my available disk space rather than increase it. Is there something else I should be doing after deleting items?

Trevor Blackmur, London

A In theory, no. Under 'General preferences', make sure that 'Auto compress file'



*Use the
freeware
Compact
utility to force
compression
of all your
data files!*

is checked and then sit back and wait. At some point, Agenda itself will notice that there's significant space to be reclaimed by removing entries marked as 'deleted', and will compress its document file. You can force the compression of *all* your database-based files at any time with the excellent freeware utility Compact (www.pSIONwelt.com/ralphsprenger). The program itself only takes up around 40K of space, and you can probably save more than that just by running the program once a week or so.

Today is not a good day



Occasionally when I select the Today view, my Revo resets itself. Any suggestions?

Iain Mitchell, Broxburn, West Lothian



This seems to represent an obscure bug in the Revo's version of EPOC, and we understand from Psion that this may happen under situations where you have just completed a backup of your Revo. Today view needs to interact with your Agenda file to read your appointments and to-do lists. When backing up, PsiWin needs to shut down your Agenda file, and if you try to access Agenda via the Today view before opening the Agenda application, things may get confused.

Take a look in 'Preferences | Today view', and change the state of the 'Keep file open' check box to see if this resolves the problem.